

THE LIFE OF  
LORD BEACONSFIELD



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# BEACONSFIELD

## LITTLE BIOGRAPHIES

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# BEACONSFIELD

BY

WALTER SICHEL

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

METHUEN & CO

36 ESSEX STREET W.C.

LONDON

1904



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"ALL IS ORDAINED, BUT MAN IS NEVERTHELESS MASTER  
OF HIS OWN ACTIONS."

THE INFERNAL MARRIAGE.

"EVERY MAN PERFORMS HIS OFFICE, AND THERE IS A  
POWER, GREATER THAN OURSELVES, THAT DISPOSES OF ALL  
THIS."

DISRAELI TO GLADSTONE, MAY 25, 1858.

"HE (Lord John Russell in 1853) has not comprehended that for the last twenty years the choice is between the maintenance of those institutions, nay, of those habits of thought which preserve monarchy, or the gradual change into absolute democracy. . . ."—DISRAELI in *The Press*, 1853.

". . . I HAVE always considered that the Tory party was the national party of England. It is not formed of a combination of oligarchs and philosophers who practise on the sectarian prejudices of a portion of the people. It is formed of all classes, from the highest to the most homely, and it upholds a series of institutions that are in theory, and ought to be in practice, an embodiment of the national requirements and the security of the national rights. . . . It is on the prudence and the courage of a community thus circumstanced that depends the fate of uncounted millions in ancient provinces; and . . . around the globe there is a circle of domestic settlements that watch us for example and inspiration."—Edinburgh Speech, 1867.

## NOTE

IN preparing this little work I have used every authority, whether printed or manuscript, available for the part played by Disraeli in his period. But more especially I have employed the whole range of Disraeli's own productions, including his pamphlets and his remarkable contributions to *The Press*.

The article in the *Quarterly Review* of last January presenting Lord Salisbury's anonymous denunciations of Disraeli's great measure of Reform in 1867 does not change my view of Disraeli's intention and achievement. It is quite forgotten that the basis of his Bill had been long laid and announced by him, and that in its essence it tallied with the main provisions of Lord John Russell's abortive Bill of 1853. Disraeli knew that the artisans must be admitted to their due share in the franchise; but, as will be seen, he was all along determined to wait until the pear was ripe, and not to precipitate such a measure before monarchy and its institutions had become

more popular than they were in the 'fifties. He also resolved, while preserving the declared benefits of the "borough" system, that the counties should not be "swamped" by the cities—though, after his death, in 1884 a stride was taken in this direction; and at the same time he refused to admit the dregs or sediment of the populace to a privilege which should be earned before it ought to be enjoyed. Lord Salisbury's "flouts and gibes" did not deter Mr. Henley and the country gentlemen from adhering to a leader who was determined at once to uphold the land and to trust the towns: and Lord Salisbury himself would scarcely have become so friendly and intimate as he did afterwards with one who was reproached with sleight of hand, had he not recognised his own mistake as to Disraeli's purposes and his shortsightedness in opposing what has proved a national benefit.

W. S.

*February 1904*

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

### 1804-1831—THE OVERTURE

PAGES

- Disraeli's place in English statesmanship—Lineage  
and early surroundings—Schooldays—Tempera-  
ment—Pamphlet on America—The Merediths and  
Austins—The two *Representatives*—The “Modern  
Dunciad”—*Vivian Grey*: its effects—Disraeli's  
illness—Early tour abroad—Eastern tour—Works  
written and projected during it: their significance  
—Crisis of Reform Bill—Disraeli's return home      1-23

## CHAPTER II

### 1832-1841—COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

- The Reform Bill—Lord Grey's Government of 1832—  
Greville's view of Peel's temperament—Disraeli's  
social and literary successes—His first candida-  
tures—Election speeches and addresses—*What is  
he?*—Peel's Ministry, 1834—The “Tamworth  
Manifesto”—Lord Lyndhurst—The “Vindica-  
tion”—“Lichfield House Compact”—Taunton  
election and challenge of O'Connell—Lord Mel-

## CONTENTS

	PAGES
bourne's Second Administration, 1835—"Appropriation"—"Runnymede Letters"— <i>The Spirit of Whiggism</i> — <i>Venetia</i> , <i>Henrietta Temple</i> —Mrs. Wyndham Lewis—Marquis of Chandos—Disraeli's "opportunism" discussed—Death of King William IV.—Accession of Queen Victoria—Disraeli elected for Maidstone—First speeches—Dying agonies of Melbourne Administration—Church and Corn—Colonies—Chartism—Dissolution—Bedchamber Plot—Lord Melbourne's resignation . . . . .	24-51

## CHAPTER III

## 1842-1846—THE DUEL

State of affairs and parties—Peel's position—The real issues—"Young England"—Disraeli's "Trilogy"—Disraeli and Peel—The "Peel Letter"—Peel vacillates—Disraeli's historical bias and basis—Disraeli's three great deliverances on Ireland—The drama of "Free Trade"—The events of 1845 and 1846—Disraeli's action and its causes—The "Edinburgh Letter"—The two sets of Cabinet Councils—Peel resigns but resumes office—Disraeli's philippics—The final scene—The Bill passed, but Peel is defeated on the Coercion Act—Peel's fall—Disraeli's reasons . . . . .	52-85
---	-------

## CHAPTER IV

## 1846-1852—AFTER THE DELUGE

The state of parties—The Cobdenites—The "Peelites" characterised — The Whigs—Palmerston—The débâcle of 1848—Disraeli's efforts to rally the Con-	
--	--

	PAGES
servatives—The “four Budgets”—Colonial unrest —“Don Pacifico”—Ecclesiastical Tithes Bill—The Jew Bill and Disraeli—Disraeli “educates” on the franchise—Peel’s death—Palmerston and the <i>coup</i> <i>d'état</i> —The Government goes out—Disraeli Chan- cellor in the Derby Cabinet—Disraeli’s magna- nimity . . . . .	86-96

## CHAPTER V

1852-1859—PLACE WITHOUT POWER AND POWER WITHOUT  
PLACE

The situation of parties and of intrigue—Disraeli’s vindication of dropped Protection— <i>The Press</i> quoted—“Principles” and “Measures”—Disraeli on the franchise—The Derby-Disraeli policy and enactments—Disraeli’s two Budgets—Peelite ob- struction—Compact between the Opposition and the Irish—The Government out and the Coalition in—Disraeli on it in <i>The Press</i> —On the prelude to the Crimean War—Its progress and entangle- ments—The “Inquiry”—Ministerial resignations —Disraeli’s speech (1855)—Intrigues against him —Treaty of Paris—Palmerston’s “little diffi- culties”—Disraeli’s attitude—Indian Mutiny— French irritation—The “Orsini” affair makes Palmerston resign . . . . .	97-116
--	--------

## CHAPTER VI

## 1858-1867—WAITING

Disraeli’s attempt to gain Gladstone—Once more Chan- cellor of Exchequer and leader of House—Italian
---

	PAGES
disturbance—India Bill “number three”—Campbell’s Oudh proclamation—The “Cabal”—Disraeli on Cardwell’s motion—Franchise Bill (1859)—Parliament dissolved—Conservatives return to power—The “Cabal” upset them on Lord Hartington’s motion—The delayed “Malmesbury Dispatches”—Derby resigns—Disraeli on progress of Conservatism—Palmerston returns to power—A Cabinet with “two faces”—Gladstone’s Budget and inconsistencies—Disraeli on the Italian Question—The American War—Our Colonies—Crisis of 1865—Disraeli on Poland—The Danish Question—The Church—Deaths and changes—Russell’s premiership—Gladstone’s Reform Bill—Lord Derby returns to power . . . . .	117-143

## CHAPTER VII

### 1867-1874—REFORMER, PREMIER, AND LEADER

Disraeli now leader—Disraeli and Gladstone—Federation of Canada—Home and Foreign disturbances—Disraeli’s address to constituents—He resolves on “Reform”—The “Resolutions”—The “Ten Minutes Bill”—The Reform Act—Its provisions—Disraeli on its purport and spirit—Abyssinian expedition and Bribery Bill—Disraeli becomes Premier—Gladstone moves for the destruction of the Irish Church—Grounds of Disraeli’s opposition—Disraeli resigns—Gladstone’s Premiership—The tenor of his Home and Foreign policy—The German War—American arbitration and “indirect claims”—Lady Beaconsfield’s death—Disraeli’s great speeches, 1872—Catholic University Bill—

## CONTENTS

xiii

PAGES

Gladstone resigns: Disraeli refuses to head a minority—Gladstone dissolves—A Conservative triumph . . . . .	144-164
---	---------

## CHAPTER VIII

## 1874-1881—"IMPERIUM ET LIBERTAS"

Disraeli's intended task—His many and many-sided measures for social, industrial, and sanitary improvement—Other Bills—Public Worship Act—Storm-clouds in the East—Purchase of Suez Canal shares—Empress of India Bill—Andrassy Note—Berlin Memorandum—State of the Porte—Russia's action in Bulgaria—Gladstone's agitation—The stirring events of 1877 and 1878—Disraeli keeps the peace—He calls out the Reserves and orders the Indian troops to Malta—His appeals to patriotism—Berlin Congress—Bismarck's admiration—The outcome of Disraeli's foreign policy—Its main principles—Indian affairs—The "Scientific Frontier"—African affairs—The Zulu War—Feeling in the country and conduct of the Opposition, 1874-1880—The Radical propaganda—Indian affairs—Ireland—Disraeli's last year—He resigns—The "Marlborough Letter"—Disraeli's death—Public tributes and sympathy—His gifts and qualities summarised . . . . .	165-196
INDEX . . . . .	197



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- The Right Honourable Benjamin Disraeli in  
1852 (*after a painting by Sir Francis Grant,  
R.A.*) . . . . . Frontispiece.
- The Author of *Vivian Grey* (*from an original sketch  
in the South Kensington Museum attributed to  
Maclise*) . . . . . to face p. 14
- Benjamin Disraeli in early youth (*after a water  
colour drawing by A. E. Chalon*) . . . . to face p. 18
- Bradenham Manor . . . . . to face p. 31
- Sketch of Disraeli the Younger in 1835 (*by Count  
D'Orsay*) . . . . . to face p. 39
- "The Age of Leetle Men" . . . . . to face p. 41
- Lord Beaconsfield's house in Grosvenor Gate to face p. 97
- Lord Beaconsfield's study at Hughenden . . to face p. 145
- The *Punch* cartoon of "Lothair" and "Juventus  
Mundi" (*by Sir John Tenniel*) . . . . to face p. 150

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Lord Beaconsfield and Mr. Corry ( <i>the caricature by "Spy" in "Vanity Fair"</i> ) . . . . .	to face p. 190
Lord Beaconsfield's tomb . . . . .	to face p. 195
"Peace with Honour" ( <i>the "Punch" cartoon by Sir John Tenniel</i> ) . . . . .	to face p. 196

# B E A C O N S F I E L D

## CHAPTER I

### 1804-1831—THE OVERTURE

Disraeli's place in English statesmanship—Lineage and early surroundings — Schooldays — Temperament — Pamphlet on America—The Merediths and Austins—The two *Representatives* — The “Modern Dunciad” — *Vivian Grey*: its effects — Disraeli's illness — Early tour abroad—Eastern tour—Works written and projected during it: their significance—Crisis of Reform Bill—Disraeli's return home.

GENIUS may be roughly classified as the impressive and the impressionable. The one is plastic and creates; the other renders and interprets. It is to the first of these that the subject of this brief memoir belongs.

Chatham had blown the first bugle-call of British imperialism. Disraeli well likened him to “a forest tree in a suburban garden.” With Chatham's illustrious son began the effort to

make reform a national weapon of defence; though the struggle with Napoleon, the international despot, frustrated his home statesmanship. In Canning arose the first constitutional champion of public opinion, though he could not bring himself to let Parliament prove its full image and expression; in him also, the first official assailant of monopoly.

With Disraeli opens the first decisive endeavour to naturalise the Democratic and to revive the Imperial idea, while he based them both on the unity of the nation. What he dreamed as a boy and breathed even in his first political pamphlets, he repeated and achieved in his age—"the happiness of the people and the prosperity of the empire"—an empire of defence, not defiance. He attuned the genius of the country to the genius of the time. He preserved the essence of the one as a moderator of the other; he nationalised Democracy, while he restored both progress and comprehensiveness to Conservatism. He enlarged without degrading the suffrage. In contrast with the detachment of bare Democracy, which in England logically tends at once towards the class-despotism of Mammon<sup>1</sup> and the undoing

<sup>1</sup> He states this thought in a passage of striking prescience contributed to his organ—*The Press*—in 1853:—“Remove that order” (the stable householder), “and the republic of to-day is the despotism of to-morrow. . . .

of united nationality, he reimparted compact vigour to those institutions<sup>1</sup> which have always harboured the popular element. So early as 1833 he perceived that England's choice lay between the democracy of Rousseau and the democracy of Bolingbroke. In a country of continuous classes, he strove to prevent the predominance of any and to conciliate the jealousies of each. In one also, where the rapid growth of huge cities tends both to absorb and clash with the dwindling population of the counties, he struggled to restore some harmony of interest and feeling. He placed the aristocratic principle—vanished as a depository of power—on its true basis, namely,

Nor is there a country in the world in which the reaction from democracy to despotism would be so sudden and complete, . . . because in no other country is there the same timidity of capital; and just in proportion as democratic progress by levelling the influence of birth elevates the influences of money, does it create a power that would at any time annihilate liberty—if liberty were brought into opposition with the three-per-cent."

<sup>1</sup> " . . . What, then, makes the country great? The national character of the country created by its institutions and by the traditionary influence impressed upon those institutions." They ". . . are broadly and deeply planted in the soil, and that soil is not the possession of any exclusive class." . . . "Those who would act as if the fact were otherwise will only find that they have converted a first-rate kingdom into a second-rate republic" (Disraeli on Mr. Gladstone's Budget, 1853).

that of privilege by virtue of excellence ; and he applied it alike to leadership and franchise ; so that England remains in progress what she stands in history—a free aristocracy. He wished to see a real Crown, a real Church, a real nobility, while he attached to them a public opinion which he tried to steady and strengthen ; and all three he strove to knit together in furthering the responsible duties of a vast Empire resting on the ideal individuality of a united nation. He combated the Emporrial and cherished the Imperial aspects of his country.<sup>1</sup> He compassed his objects not through social upheavals, but by social sympathy rather than by state-tutelage ; by levelling up instead of levelling down. And he was ever hostile to that bare Utilitarianism which considers mere wealth as happiness, and true progress as arithmetical. As regards party, he succeeded in purging a spurious and shrivelled Toryism of its exclusiveness, and throwing it by his action into sharp relief with the vague and upheaving tendencies of latter-day Liberalism, which he forecasted in a fine speech of 1846. His ambition from the first was to reconstruct and settle a warped faction as a great party on its forgotten and national basis. Believing, as he did, that the development of the principles of 1688 never succeeded under monopolising oligarchs in rightly

<sup>1</sup> This contrast is well pointed by Mr. Ewald.

representing the popular side of the Constitution, he struggled steadily to make Conservatism what he styled at a dark hour in 1859 “a party to assist progress and resist revolution.” In a country like England, he discerned the support of tradition for the need of a strong Government, which must rest on institutions favouring liberty, and not, as elsewhere, on centralisation, or agitation, which destroy it. And he would heartily have agreed with Heine’s description of the demagogue who “loved the ‘people’ so well that he was ready to share *its* last crust with it.” Personality, Unity, Continuity, were his keynotes. The two movements which at all times fascinated his contemplation were those of the English and the French Revolutions, diametrically opposed, yet so curiously converging in our polities; for the very successors of the anti-Jacobites eventually became the pro-Jacobins of 1796.

He divined even in 1833<sup>1</sup> that his era was unfolding the transition from feudalism to federalism; and, in adjusting them to each other, he studied to fuse their spirits rather than their forms. He discerned that “natural” equality is a phrase clashing with the facts of race and experience; “material” equality (the idea of Utilitarians) depends on an unlimited employment of Labour

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his “What is he?” elaborated in the *Revolutionary Epic*.

involving the ultimate destruction of national barriers,<sup>1</sup> and certainly unsecured by the mere "liberation of commerce" which Peel adopted as his standard; whereas "civil" equality, which he always advocated, only means the overthrow of a monopoly of that privilege which should stand open as the meed of merit. Above all, he held that English "duties" were more ennobling than Rousseau's "rights."

Disraeli combined the artistic with the practical temperament; he was both dreamer and statesman, and his defects were allied to his qualities. He picturesqued reality, but it was always reality that he picturesqued. His vision alike and prevision were both patriotic and European, though their intensity sometimes blinded him to the prosier side of the surface. In one respect at anyrate he resembles Napoleon—"his vast and fantastic conceptions of policy." Moreover, what specially distinguishes him from the penetration of his contemporaries is his *social* grasp. Thus while in 1861 the majority failed to discern the drift of the American War, because, to quote Mr. Morley, we applied political maxims to a social revolution, Disraeli foresaw its significance from the outset. Thus, too, in 1881 he forewarned his country that then refused to

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli's Address to the Glasgow Students, November 19, 1873.

be forearmed. This talisman of imaginative insight caused him constantly to be misunderstood by the party jealousies and insular prejudices of the passing hour. But "Time"—whom he invokes in *Contarini Fleming*—has justified his message, and it is with truth that Lord Salisbury said of him in his funeral oration that "zeal for the greatness of Britain was the passion of his life."

Benjamin Disraeli was born on December 21, 1804, probably at 6 John Street, Bedford Row.<sup>1</sup> His father was the celebrated student and author; his mother, the sister of George Basevi, the architect who designed part of Belgrave Square, and perished while restoring Ely Cathedral. A cousin, Nathanael Basevi (who quarrelled with him), became a conveyancer in Lincoln's Inn; and a maternal aunt, Mrs. Wing, survived

<sup>1</sup> The birth-date has been doubted, but his birth certificate exists (cf. Mr. Lake's *Reminiscences*). His baptismal certificate (July 21, 1817.—He was an "early," his father a "late" Christian) describes him as "about twelve years" old, but a letter cited by Mr. J. Morley in his *Life of Gladstone* (ii. p. 547) confirms the date assigned by implication; his certificate of initiation into the Jewish Church, which is quoted by Mr. Ewald in his *Earl of Beaconsfield and his Times* (p. 3), does the same. His birthplace may have been Adelphi Terrace. Isaac Disraeli seems also to have occupied a house in Islington. In 1817 the Disraelis moved to King's, or Theobald's, Road, Holborn, afterwards to 6 Bloomsbury Square, and eventually to Bradenham.

to congratulate him on his triumphal return from Berlin.

His paternal descent was distinguished. The Disraelis sprang from the “Sephardim”—an aristocratic caste immemorial on the coasts of the Mediterranean, and powerful in the Peninsula before the Goths; as “Nuevos,”<sup>1</sup> nobles and landlords in Castile and Arragon ere Torquemada banned them to Venice or Amsterdam. This, too, was the stock of Spinoza and of Uriel Acosta, the knight-errant and troubadour; this, too, of many of the first Jesuits, and some of the first members of the London Royal Society. From this strain hailed, among other families domiciled in England, the Villa Reals, the second most illustrious family in Portugal, and thrice intermarried with our own nobility. The Disraelis’ kinsmen in Spain had been the Laras, who retained their Gothic style. Disraeli is said to have preserved their pedigree and their scutcheon, and so proud was he of them that an eminent friend, meeting him on the boat between Calais and Dover, once rallied him by quoting Byron’s

“The chief of Lara is returned again,  
And why had Lara crossed the bounding main ?”

His Venetian ancestor, who found asylum as a

<sup>1</sup>The “Nuevos” were the “New Christians” of Castile and Arragon. Readers of *Tancred* will remember that the grand prior at Jerusalem is “Alonzo Lara,” “a Nuevo.”

banker under the banner of St. Mark's, assumed, out of gratitude to his God, so Lord Beaconsfield relates, the name of "D'Israeli," "one never borne before or since by any other family"; but it is a curious fact that during the fourteenth century "Bertucci Israello" figures in the old chronicle on which Byron drew among the associates of Marino Faliero's conspiracy.

Disraeli's grandfather and namesake—a cadet of the Venetian house—came to England at eighteen years of age in 1748, and shortly afterwards was duly naturalised. He was twice married, made and lost at least one fortune,<sup>1</sup> entertained his "great acquaintance," Sir Horace Mann, with music and maccaroni in his Italian villa at Enfield, and died in London, aged eighty-seven, in 1817. He was by temperament ardent, adventurous, nonchalant, and sanguine. The dreamy and romantic son, by predisposition a man not of ledgers but of letters, he never understood, but always petted. Lord Beaconsfield blended the two temperaments of his father and his grandfather, and perhaps perplexed the former almost as much as he in his turn had perplexed the latter.

Of Isaac Disraeli's union there were five children; the eldest, Sarah, Disraeli's darling and only sister (who lives in parts of the characters of "Miriam," of "Myra," and of "Venetia"),

<sup>1</sup> Cf. B.M. Add. MS., 3619, f. 8.

the first to hearten and appreciate him, was born in 1802, and died at Twickenham in 1859. Disraeli himself followed ; afterwards, a son who died in boyhood ; next, James, a Commissioner of Inland Revenue and gentleman-farmer ; and last, Ralph, originally intended for the army, but eventually barrister and Deputy-Clerk of the Parliaments. Longevity ran in the family. Isaac Disraeli died January 19, 1848, in his eighty-second year ; his wife, April 21, 1847, in her seventy-second. Both were buried at Bradenham, where there is a tablet to their memories in the parish church where they had long worshipped, and the county to which they had been endeared by associations long before it became their abode.<sup>1</sup>

Disraeli observes rightly that he was “born in a library.” His father was a bibliomaniac, both patient and poetical, a volatile recluse of “passionless tenacity.” He was an early member of the Athenæum Club, though, according to his son, he seldom entered it except to consult its library. But it was not only among antiquarians like D once or scholars like Bliss that he moved. He indited good verses<sup>2</sup> and tolerable romances, besides educating taste by enlivening research. His converse was sought by many of the literary,

<sup>1</sup> Through, among others, the Penn family.

<sup>2</sup> He had begun by braving “Peter Pindar” (Wolcot), who became his firm friend.

dramatic, and artistic world. Pye had been his earliest intimate. The poets Moore and Rogers were among his friends; Byron, with whom he had corresponded, and Walter Scott, who had praised his verses, and John Murray the First, who was to marvel at his son, among his younger acquaintances. He knew Mrs. Siddons and Barry the painter. Nor was his circle confined to the Muses. John Baring and the two Downmans had enlarged it, while his own learning brought him into contact with the university which afterwards conferred on him an honorary degree. Isaac Disraeli, unworldly<sup>1</sup> and disdainful of lucre as he was, was also something of a *gourmet*. Among his closest allies was Mr. Meredith—the patron of “Platonist” Taylor, a retired contractor, who played Mæcenas at literary “symposia.” His heir and nephew, William Meredith, became affianced to Sarah Disraeli, and afterwards travelled to the East with “Disraeli the younger” and James Clay, only to die at Alexandria. But the two families with whom he was most at home was that of Ellis, the poetical *littérateur*,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So much so that he presented his publisher with his first copyright.

<sup>2</sup> Speaking of interruptions to literary seclusion, Isaac Disraeli, in his delightful book on the literary character (p. 150, ed. 1839), notices him as one who usually escaped “by a leap out of the window.”

and Charles Austin, a shrewd and kindly solicitor, whose pretty and witty wife—aunt of the future Sir Henry Layard—held a “salon” and exercised a great influence on the young Disraeli’s early development. At one time the Disraelis shared a house in the country with this congenial couple, and in 1827, after the first instalment of *Vivian Grey*, Disraeli the younger travelled with them in Italy and Germany.

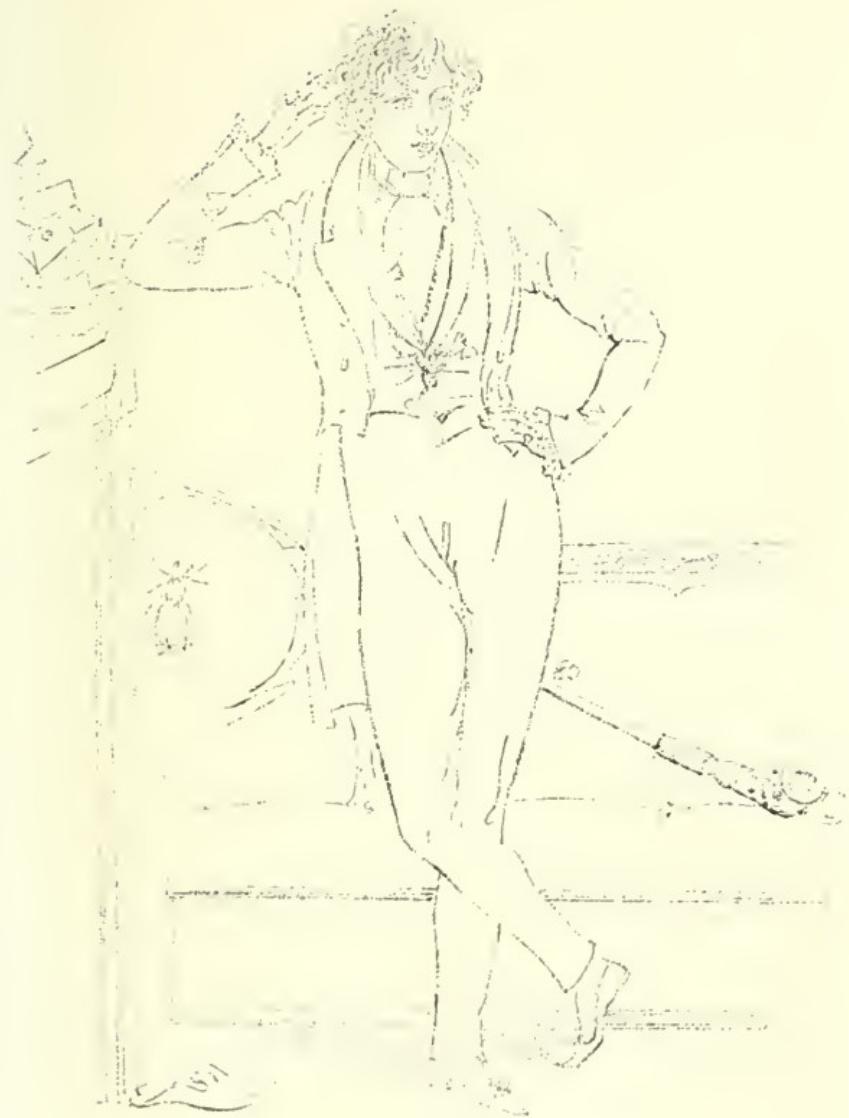
Among such surroundings and under the eye of a father who had himself written on the “pre-disposition” of literary genius, the boy Disraeli proved something of a puzzle. By turns pensive and sparkling, shy and daring, precocious and immature, bold in bewilderment, he was conscious from the first of exceptional powers chafed into smouldering force by a gnawing ambition which could find neither vent nor aim. It had been suggested that the lad should be sent to Eton, but his mother shuddered lest the race of which he was so proud should, under the prevalent prejudice, expose him to persecution. He might be roasted alive at some barbarian *auto-da-fé*. So he appears to have been despatched to a private school at Blackheath, or Enfield where Isaac Disraeli had himself been educated, (it is uncertain which); afterwards to one kept by a Mr. Cogan at Walthamstow, whither the son of their physician (one Dr. Jones) also repaired, and finally to a

bigger school in the neighbourhood of Winchester. The writer was told some thirty years ago by one who had been Disraeli's schoolfellow, that he was the ringleader of a "barring out," and so eloquent in the conspiracy that the master himself listened spellbound at the keyhole. The young Jones also remembered Disraeli's kindness to him in lesson-time, and how he would sketch caricatures to amuse him in his notebooks.<sup>1</sup> He was perpetually plunged in reveries which absorbed his being, and in which he acted the chief part in dazzling dramas of action. Now he was heading an army and leading a forlorn hope; now he was controlling empires or de-throning dynasties; and then suddenly he would return to the everyday sports in which he schooled himself to excel. He learned to be a good boxer and fencer, an excellent rider and a fair shot. But Isaac Disraeli, immersed in study, knew not what to make of a precocity so audacious, so unsettling, and so unsettled. The school reports, too, were not always satisfactory. The lad, if not an imp of darkness, was at least an imp of light. Affectionate and eager, he was yet a daredevil. Omnivorous in his reading, he despised "words" and sighed for "ideas." Before he was seventeen, his schooldays ended—it may be, to judge from a passage in *Contarini Fleming*, by compulsion.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lake's *Reminiscences*.

There is reason to suppose that his father purposed a university career, but that the young Disraeli refused it, on the grounds that a stripling who meant to govern men would only squander his time in dabbling with books already mastered. In despair, Isaac Disraeli destined him first for a Government office,<sup>1</sup> but this too was rejected. The cousin was to practise as a barrister, and the young Disraeli found himself reluctantly articled, as a preparation for the Bar, to Messrs. Swain & Co., solicitors, of Frederick's Place. All proved unvailing. He is reported to have been assiduous and capable; but among deeds and parchments Disraeli conned poems and histories. He ate his dinners and was "entered" at Lincoln's Inn, but the Bar never attracted. "Pooh!" as he laughed in *Vivian Grey*, "law and bad jokes till we are forty, and then, with the most brilliant success, the prospect of gout and a coronet!" He panted for action. Already in his boyish musings over the pages of Bolingbroke, and of that Burke from whose abode he eventually derived his title, he had (as he himself has recounted) found a clue to the mystification of parties, and began to see why it was that the exclusive Whigs had gained the credit of those popular principles which had enabled them to engross office, why again the once "national" party on the other hand, in

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lake's *Reminiscences*.



AUTHOR OF VIVIAN & GREY

*From an original sketch in the South Kensington Museum  
attributed to Maclise*



their eagerness to preserve the letter and not the life of institutions, had declined, and sunk into a narrow and odious "Eldonism." Two names and careers fascinated him from the first as brilliant exceptions — the one, of the master Pitt, the other, of the pupil Canning, whom he heard speak, and to whom he dedicated his earliest and anonymous publication, which prophesied that "in proportion as the energies of America are developed and her resources strengthened, so will the power and prosperity of England be confirmed and increased."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile his gifted restlessness pricked him into authorship. He seems to have contributed politics to the *Representative*, a paper which came to an end about 1823,<sup>2</sup> but which Disraeli tried to reorganise under Murray's and Lockhart's

<sup>1</sup> This pamphlet, published in 1825, before Disraeli was twenty-one, seems to have been written at the instance of one Mr. Powles, who appears also to have been concerned with the *Representative*. It turns on the impolicy of the Government in restricting English enterprise in American mines, and points a distinction between "Lawyers and Legislators" (B.M. B.K.K., 156). The dedication runs from "a sincere admirer" to "one who has reformed without bravery or scandal of former times or persons; as king counsel of both times. Of the ancient time, that which is best; of the modern time, that which is fittest"

<sup>2</sup> It was pro-Caroline and anti-Government

auspices two years later.<sup>1</sup> He edited and wrote a preface for an edition of *Paul Jones*, and completed a novel, *Aylmer Papillon*, about one banned under the Alien Act by a Ministry resentful of a metaphysical poem. Murray declined to publish the book, though he encouraged its author.<sup>2</sup> He contributed poetical satire to the *Star Chamber* in the shape of the "Modern Dunciad." Two lines may be rescued from oblivion: they concern Keats—

"Who grasped the Theban shell and struck a tone  
No master yet had wakened—save its own."

And suddenly—in 1826, with Mrs. Austin as

<sup>1</sup> Murray despatched Disraeli to Scott and Lockhart in the summer of 1825. Canning wanted Lockhart to edit the organ. Lockhart demurred because editorship was beneath him. "You will not be editor," exclaimed the young Disraeli, "but Director-General of an immense organ" (cf. Lockhart's *Diaries*). Disraeli's speedy withdrawal, however, and its collapse caused no breach between Disraeli and Murray, whom he had styled "the emperor," and to whom he confided *Contarini* in 1832, with Lockhart for censor. Writing, however, to Napier in 1833, Disraeli advertises to Lockhart as a "tenth-rate novelist at the head of a great critical journal" (B.M. Add. MS., 34616, f. 45). John Murray had introduced him to Scott as an extraordinary genius teeming with ideas yet absolutely practical, simple as a child and beloved by the young.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mr. Greenwood's "Life" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*), quoting Mr. Smiles' "Murray."

critical amanuensis, and Colburn for publisher—he burst upon the world with the first part of *Vivian Grey*.

It is said that this amazing production, hailed as heralding a second Congreve, was written in the previous year, by the advice of the rector of Bradenham, to defray a debt. It was published in five volumes, three of which appeared first separately, and so attracted the notice of “Fum, our royal bird,” that “the greatest gentleman in Europe” demanded another two. The “Dedication,” never reproduced, may interest the reader:—

“ To  
The Best and Greatest of Men  
I dedicate these volumes.  
He for whom it is intended will accept and  
Appreciate the Compliment:  
Those for whom it is not intended  
Will do the same.”

The book, sparkling and cynical, took the town by storm, and brought its author into many drawing-rooms—notably that of Lady Blessington at Seamore Place. All the characters were variously identified; “Keys” appeared, and the boyish author awoke to find himself famous. Handsome and Byronic, as he figures in Chalon’s portrait, he was feted and caressed. Yet, except when roused into rapid and flashing utterance by

the spur of ideas, he seemed silent, watchful, reticent, even languid. Fashionable society might be his flatterer or his game ; it was never his friend, though he loved its stir and flutter. Even then there was a certain loneliness of soul about him which he almost resented. And it is characteristic of him that he soon regretted his success. The purpose of the satire pierced deeper than was warranted by the author's inexperience. It was designed to show the hollowness and peril of political adventure, and yet how out of an adventurer suffering and experience can mould a great character and even a great man. The episode of the fallen Cleveland sobbing amid the children on his lonely bench in Kensington Gardens is truly pathetic. But Society only seized upon the audacious wit, and the brazen side of *Vivian* was constantly afterwards affixed to Disraeli's own career. His family disrelished it ; he himself was so ashamed that his next production was published anonymously. But he had made his mark. The second portion of the book, composed in the company of the Austins abroad, increased it. Turned in again upon himself, he read and reflected with feverish energy. Histories and philosophies, ancient and modern, he devoured. He exaggerated his escapades, yet, as he said long afterwards in a far different connection, "Where the



BENJAMIN DISRAELI IN EARLY YOUTH

*After a water-colour drawing by A. F. G. G.*



impulses are good there is always hope.”<sup>1</sup> Consumed with a conviction that his mission was to lead his country, he was discouraged by the sober candour of his friends, who only marked the unbalanced judgment of a megalomaniac in a distraught imagination. A strange illness fell on him, perhaps of an epileptic nature. He had trances. The physicians were at sea, because they imagined the cause, which was mainly nervous, to be purely physical. For days he remained in a darkened room. A sense of, and a brooding over, irresistible destiny oppressed him. His sister alone seemed to understand and believe. His ambition was honourable, and he was persuaded it was within his capacity and might be within his grasp. If he could not govern men, he might at least influence thought. Was he, after all, a poet, or dared he aspire to be a statesman? Was his the courage of fear or of confidence? What cant it seemed to ignore ambition as a great incentive to real greatness! More than half a century later the present Duke of Devonshire, opposing but admiring Lord Beaconsfield, did him wise justice in this regard. “I should like to know,” he said, speaking to his constituents, “what man who has attained the position which he has attained in the political life of his country is not actuated by feelings

<sup>1</sup> In 1879, in a speech on the Eastern Question.

of ambition. No one certainly can attribute any mean or unworthy feelings to Lord Beaconsfield."

Before his malady had fastened on him he had once more astonished the world by three satires—part Swift in bitterness, part Voltaire in wit, part Lucian in whim and subtlety. *Ixion*, *The Infernal Marriage*, and *Popanilla*, in which politics, poets, and society are burlesqued with speed and ease, are among the best of their kind; yet their author was not yet twenty-five, and could be as pensive and sad as he could be sprightly and mordant, as deep-feeling as he was far-seeing.

In such dejection, intensified by a financial loss, yet with such innate elation, "Something within me," wrote Disraeli the younger to a friend who had joined him in the venture,—"something within me whispers that I may still be great." The hopes and affections of many talented companions were with him.

At length the Eastern tour was devised and sanctioned. It proved the best prescription. In the summer of 1829 he started with his two allies: Spain, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Palestine, Syria—all were visited.

He was thrown out of himself by novelty and action. Brigands were feared—he rescued a lady; pirates were expected—he armed and drilled the

sailors. He forced his way, despite the Moslems, into the Mosque of Omar. Of the three historical faces, so to speak, that haunted him—Jerusalem, Veniee, Spain—he beheld the first and last; he had already gazed upon the second. In the first he revered the majesty of inspiration; in Athens, the grace; at Constantinople he gained his first glimpse of what rules the East. On the plains of Troy he conceived the theme of his *Revolutionary Epick*. In Cyprus he first discerned what he was afterwards to acquire for his country. Gradually his attack—"the enemy"<sup>1</sup>—succumbed. The travellers met with a warm reception by illustrious men in many lands—English governors, Albanian intriguers, Syrian dreamers, Turkish pachas. For one of these in Egypt Disraeli drafted a constitution. At Janina he witnessed a war and conversed and drank with the conqueror; and it was on this journey that he enlisted the services of Tita, Byron's gondolier, whom his father afterwards engaged at Bradenham, and for whom Disraeli, many years later, procured the post of porter at a Government office. Everywhere was adventure, enterprise, distinction. The "Home Letters" which record them are light, brilliant, and unaffected.

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli in his last illness still retained this expression. Mr. Gladstone habitually used the same phrase of his neuralgia.

In a few bold strokes—for “descriptions are a bore”—they paint the indelible scenes and the motley masquerade with a master hand, and some of the colours were reintroduced into *Contarini Fleming*, which was then begun, although not published until 1832. Yet mixed with all this thought, interest, and excitement was the longing to return. As he sang on the Aegean main—

“ Bright are the skies above me,  
And blue the waters roll.  
Ah! If but those who love me  
Were here, my joy were whole.  
When those we love are wanting,  
Then o'er the clouded heart,  
A thousand visions haunting,  
Their darkening shadows dart.

Wild bird that fliest so lightly,  
Ah! Whither dost thou roam?  
Thou art a wanderer rightly,  
Thou hast not left thy home;  
For thou, altho' thou art restless,  
Art not so lone as he  
Whose spirit, sad and restless,  
Impels him o'er thy sea.”

Before he quitted England—indeed, in 1827—he had, to employ a phrase of Bolingbroke often used by him, “chalked out” the wondrous story of a Prince of the Captivity who in the twelfth century vanquished the Moslem and nearly

founded an empire on free principles. *Alroy* was written with emotion at Jerusalem, though it was not issued till 1833. At Athens he projected the *Rise of Iskander*, which appeared in 1832, a pendant of Greek rivalling Hebrew heroism; and as the undercurrent of these two dreams (both racial aspirations after nationality) he also sketched out the *Psychological Romance of Contarini Fleming*, where his own instincts and aspirations, blent with his father's, are most conspicuously, if immaturely, suggested.

He was recalled home by the political revolution and social ferments of 1831. The Reform Bill was passed by an aristocratic Government in a manner that defied and abolished, against its will, its essentially aristocratic character.<sup>1</sup> The commercial classes alone were benefited, the industrial remained angry and estranged. For the country a new era was opening. The surface of parties was not yet confused, but their understrain was agitated and their leaders perplexed. Monarchy itself might be in danger. All institutions were on their trial. For the young Disraeli also the hour had struck.

<sup>1</sup> Even in 1833 Lord Grey said, “Portugal must not be liberal—the constitution had done all the mischief.”

## CHAPTER II

### 1832-1841—COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

The Reform Bill—Lord Grey's Government of 1832—Greville's view of Peel's temperament—Disraeli's social and literary successes—His first candidatures—Election speeches and addresses—*What is he?*?—Peel's Ministry, 1834—The “Tamworth Manifesto”—Lord Lyndhurst—The “Vindication”—“Lichfield House Compact”—Taunton election and challenge of O'Connell—Lord Melbourne's Second Administration, 1835—“Appropriation”—“Runnymede Letters”—*The Spirit of Whiggism*—*Venetia, Henrietta Temple*—Mrs. Wyndham Lewis—Marquis of Chandos—Disraeli's “opportunism” discussed—Death of King William IV.—Accession of Queen Victoria—Disraeli elected for Maidstone—First speeches—Dying agonies of Melbourne Administration—Church and Corn—Colonies—Chartism—Dissolution—Bedchamber Plot—Lord Melbourne's resignation.

BEFORE approaching Disraeli's first candidatures for Parliament, a bird's-eye view of the political landscape is indispensable.

The nineteenth century, an epilogue to the French Revolution, was a liberating era, but

throughout all its wars of liberation the problem constantly arises of what true freedom is, and whether its standard is identical in differing countries and among divergent and unreconciled races. In England above all countries, with its Ireland and its institutions, a strong Government on firm party lines, as the Duke of Wellington was never tired of asserting, is a primary requisite, because, as Disraeli exclaimed in *What is he?* during the storms of 1833, "the prosperity of no society so much depends upon public confidence as that of the British nation." In 1846 Mr. Gladstone himself declared of Peel that in England "to abjure party was impossible."<sup>1</sup>

The generous movement of liberation spread to creeds, to classes, to races, to nationalities; but hand in hand with it, and in no logical or necessary alliance, went the Rousseauism of "Equality," with the consequence that emancipation was to be extended in theory to mere numbers, in practice as well as theory to commerce, and even, as in the case of the Danube, to rivers.

The Reform Bill, which Peel had resisted, was passed by a feeble Ministry from menace and not from conviction. Had this proved otherwise, it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Morley's *Life*, i. p. 295, and compare Disraeli's observations in the *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, p. 224, the spirit of which perpetually pervades his speeches.

would have been a far wider and wiser measure. Had Peel been a really creative statesman, he would have risen to the occasion and accepted office in 1832; in declining it he made an error far more fatal than Lord Derby afterwards did in 1855, though both these false steps proved equally vexatious.

There never was a weaker Government in troublous times than Lord Grey's in 1832, because although there were both strong heads out of office in its support and some wise ones in its Cabinet, it was a Government of panic, and even office trembled in the scales when there was "no such thing as a great party knit together by community of opinion."<sup>1</sup> The fatal month of May saw the Government half out and half in again. Even Lord Harrowby was asked to form an Administration. Each class assailed the other and the institution which represented it. Discontent and sedition stalked with open violence. The Crown was insulted, the Lords dethroned and declared moribund, the people rumbling with sullen discontent. And yet all that the Government could do, while the Continent too was disturbed, was to pitch morsels to the lions lest they should spring on the one institution about which the Government really cared—office. The tumult of this period is best mirrored in the cold pages

<sup>1</sup> Greville, iii.

of Greville, confirming Disraeli's brilliant summaries in *Coningsby* and in the *Life of Lord George Bentinck*. Among the miserable "Conservatives" (the Tories were thus styled about this time) there was only one commanding figure—Peel. But Peel commanded more from parliamentary management than from originative power. At this very crisis he was doing, writes Greville, what he could "to inflame and to divide." "He means," writes Greville again, "to open a house to all comers, and having imbibed in his career much of the liberal spirit of the age, he found himself in a state of no small perplexity between his old connections and his more enlarged propensities." All honour to Peel for his open mind, but it is to the credit neither of his mind nor of his soul that they lacked bigness and force to resolve difficulties and lead his party and the country on the path of progress undivorced from the principles of liberty and of order. He was perhaps a new type in English politics, that of the conscientious merchant in affairs, but he was never a man of the world for all his good intentions, lofty motives, and consummate management. One of his main reasons for refusing office in 1832 was that after his change on Catholic Emancipation he had declared he would never serve as second to the Duke of Wellington again. His conscientious concessions

proved frequent, but it was scarcely from conviction that he was to be suspected in 1834 of being "about to propitiate by great professions of reform"; nor had it been out of conscience that, in Lord Palmerston's words, "his original intention had been to oppose the Reform Bill as revolution and then bring in a moderate measure of his own."<sup>1</sup> Whenever his naturally high mind turned its coat of second-hand opinion into a suit of convictions fitted on by others, and wore its new garments on the political stage, he became, to cite Greville once more, "beaten from positions by which he rose to desertions dexterously managed."<sup>2</sup>

While public outburst had thus shattered the foundations of the two great traditional parties, while the ruck of those parties had almost converted the word "idiot" from its derivative meaning of a "private" into the sad significance of a "public" person, there remained a small knot of Independents (or Radicals, as they began to be styled), who without definitely espousing either party, and without any visible tie save that of the need for extending reform (for not all of

<sup>1</sup> He was deterred by Granville Somerset. Greville, iii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. for the above estimates, Greville, vol. ii. pp. 257, 264, 354-55, 445, 496; vol. iii. 189; Morley's *Gladstone*, i. 120. Disraeli's account tallies with Greville's contemporary opinion.

them were Utilitarians, nor were they all agreed as to the means of extension), were being fast felt as a power in the country. They were not all statistical like Hume, nor agitators like O'Connell or Attwood; some were imaginative or meditative, such as Burdett, Roebuck, Duncombe,<sup>1</sup> notably Bulwer and his close friend "Disraeli the younger." But Disraeli never contemplated any other goal than the apparent impossibility of adapting the democracy, which he foresaw and proclaimed inevitable in his early pamphlets, to the "national" party of the State, and through it to the native institutions and character of the country. "The best hope and chance," observed Greville, after conference with Lyndhurst in 1834, "is that a number of really independent men, unpledged, may be returned who will hold something like a balance between the two extreme parties." And four years earlier Mr. Gladstone's father had delivered himself in something of the same strain.<sup>2</sup> "I am still a Reformer," writes Disraeli to his sister in the February of 1832, "but I shall destroy the foreign policy of the Grey faction."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Duncombe had been Disraeli's friend for some years. When *Sybil* was written, he procured for him the correspondence of Feargus O'Connor.

<sup>2</sup> Greville, iii. p. 160; Morley, i. p. 69.

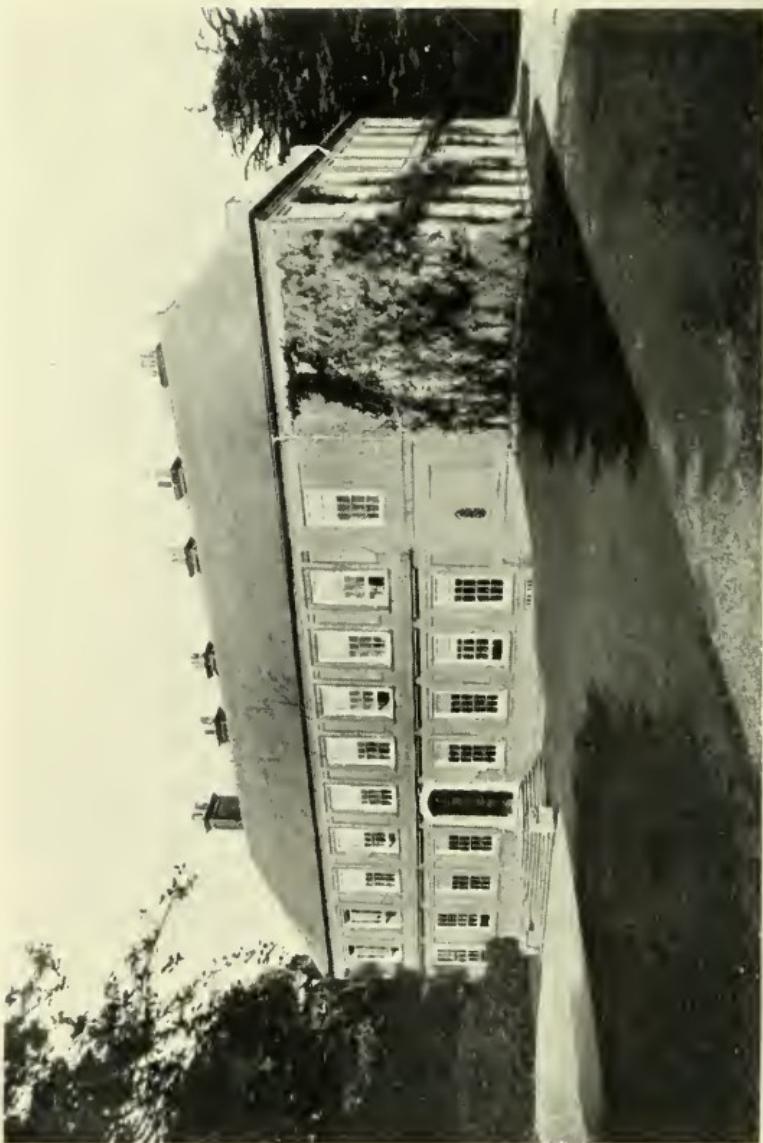
<sup>3</sup> *Correspondence*, p. 3.

In the spring of 1832 occurred his first chance, through a vacancy at Chepping (or as it now is, "High") Wycombe. It was in his home district, and he was friendly with his opponent, the Prime Minister's brother.

Since his return his books (including *The Young Duke*, which in Count Mirabel contains a rough sketch of D'Orsay), his travels, his terse gaiety and graceful bearing had made him a lion of the season. He was asked everywhere, and knew everyone, from the blue-bloods to the blue-stockings, from the Prince of Canino to the "Sappho of Brompton." With poets like Moore and Campbell, and wits like Mathews and Luttrell, he held his own; and he recounts to his "dearest Sa," the latter's *mot*, "that the two most disgusting things in the world, because you cannot deny them, are Warrender's wit and Croker's talents." Old Madame D'Arblay was his "stauncest admirer." Among the statesmen he had met Melbourne at Mrs. Norton's (the Sheridans were always his great admiration), and had astonished even his *sangfroid* by saying that he wished to be Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup> Peel he had neighboured at Eliot's. Lord John Russell had sounded him through Charles Gore as to whether he would join the Whigs, and his answer had

<sup>1</sup> He had said the same amid general laughter some years before at Mrs. Austin's. Cf. *The Life of Sir Henry Layard*.





BRADENHAM MANOR

been, “ they had one claim on his support : they needed it.” For the Whigs he was resolved never to fight, and he remained resolute against them despite subsequent overtures from Lord Durham. Had he been a mere opportunist, how readily could he have joined a set who were now supposed to be at last safe in their chairs ! He was already in the thick of the fray. He heard the prompter’s cues as well as the actor’s speeches during that memorable month of May. Bulwer<sup>1</sup> he took with him in brief spells of delightful retirement to Bradenham, and Lyndhurst also, with whom he was already on intimate terms. And above all, it was in this eventful year that he first made acquaintance with his future wife.<sup>2</sup> He was winning, pensive, and caustic ; yet he could be joyous and even frolicsome. He was never a pedant. Though he scintillated with kindred spirits, yet in general society that “ ruminating silence,” of which the great Fox’s intimates complained, often distinguished him. But in congenial company (as Bulwer’s brother has assured

<sup>1</sup> He wrote for Bulwer’s *New Monthly Magazine*, as afterwards for Lady Blessington’s literary ventures.

<sup>2</sup> “ I was introduced ‘ by particular desire ’ to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, a pretty little woman, a flirt and rattle. . . . She told me that she ‘ liked silent, melancholy men.’ I answered ‘ That I had no doubt of it.’ ”—*Correspondence* (April 28, 1832), p. 6.

Mr. Fredrick Greenwood) he distanced all in thought and expression. Nothing can exceed the light-heartedness of the brilliant letters penned in the haste of engrossing engagements, political and social, and amid the labours of revising *Contarini*, of completing *Alroy*, of continuing *Iskander*, and of publishing *Gallomania*.<sup>1</sup> In their exhilarating blend of youth, frolic, thought and action, the vista of the future through the mists of the present, the opening of career, friendship, and enterprise, these bachelor days in Duke Street, St. James', must be ranked among the happiest of his life.

He came forward to contest High Wycombe "wearing the badge of no party and the livery of no faction." He stood as a Reformer, opposed to all cliques of selfishness, and as an anti-Whig. Bulwer had asked and obtained letters recommending him from Hume and O'Connell, and of this fact some capital was afterwards fairly made by his enemies.<sup>2</sup> He lost by a majority of eleven. In the autumn, however, Parliament was dissolved, and he again sought the suffrages of the Wycombe electors. His address pleaded for "retrenchment,"

<sup>1</sup> "A very 'John Bull book,' which will delight you and my mother."—*Correspondence*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> One of the points was whether he still belonged to an extreme club for which Bulwer had proposed him, but from which he withdrew his name. The club, however, apparently ceased to exist soon after it was formed.

as he was to do again in 1859. In the upset balance of parties he was in favour of the ballot and of those triennial parliaments for which Bolingbroke and Wyndham had striven a century earlier—"of which," added the candidate, "the Whigs originally deprived us. And by repealing the taxes upon knowledge, I would throw the education of the people into the hands of the philosophic student instead of the ignorant adventurer." He proceeded to sketch the situation:—

"Ireland in rebellion, the Colonies in convulsion, our foreign relations in a state of such inextricable confusion that we are told that war alone can sever the Gordian knot of complicated blunders; the farmer in doubt, the shipowner in despair, our merchants without trade and our manufacturers without markets, the revenue declining and the army increased, the wealthy hoarding their useless capital and pauperism prostrate in our once contented cottages. . . ."

And he wound up by a stirring appeal to renew the ideals of the early Georgian Tories by "a national party"—by the destruction of oligarch aristocracy whether "Whig" or "Tory." His doctrines, inspired by study alike of the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup> and of the signs of the times, were

<sup>1</sup> After praising Wyndham, he remarked, ". . . Lord Bolingbroke, one of the ablest men who ever lived, was a firm and uncompromising Tory, and he advocated triennial parliaments. He said that without this there was no security for the people . . . and yet I am 'a destructive Radical.' So much for consistency!"

derided, and he was defeated once more. Plain folks preferred the plain colours of Whig and Tory. They suspected what they failed to grasp; and they could not understand one who pictured the Whigs as a Venetian oligarchy in the phrases of Swift or Bolingbroke, and the Tories as an effete remnant of withered exclusiveness, instead of that "National" Party which Bolingbroke had inspired and Burke upheld.

Events marched rapidly as he had foreseen. The "Reform" Government limped to its fall. After a futile spasm on the part of Lord Mel bourne, and a provisional Administration by Wellington, Lord Althorpe's elevation to the Upper House gave King William the pretext to summon Sir Robert from Rome. On December 16, for the third time, Disraeli presented himself before the Wycombe electors.

Meanwhile, in 1833, when the Whigs were trying to capture the Radicals, he had issued a manifesto in his pamphlet of *What is he?*<sup>1</sup> which proclaimed that the way in which an insufficient Reform Bill was passed had rung the knell of any exclusive system of government, that England had now to choose between absolute or monarchical democracy, that Government itself and the Constitution were at stake, and that the wisest combination would be one between the

<sup>1</sup> So called from Lord Grey's query in a letter.

Radicals and the Conservatives. It was well received, and enjoyed a wildfire sale. In the same year he had addressed the Marylebone electors under an impending vacancy which never occurred. He repeated the independence of his attitude, and disclaimed any indebtedness to "either of the aristocratic parties." The High Wycombe speech stands among the most trenchant and witty that he ever delivered. It contains that sparkling simile of the falling and sprawling jackasses in the circus, which Duerow still maintains he rides abreast, and the successive deserters from the "undivided" Reform Ministry. It ranks with those many dramatic imageries of sarcasm which remain classical in oratory; but it also contains a most striking passage of deeper import regarding Ireland which was to prove the overthrow of Sir Robert Peel's shortlived Government, and the shame and snare alike of successive Governments up to our own generation. The appropriation of surplus tithe revenues to general education had been mooted as a panacea for physical misery fomented by race-conflict preyed on by agitation:—

" . . . But, gentlemen, I for one will never consent that the surplus revenues . . . shall ever be appropriated to any other object save the interests of the Church of England, because experience has taught me that an establishment is never despoiled except to benefit an aristocracy. It is the interest of the people to support the Church, for

the Church is their patrimony, their only hereditary property ; it is their portal to power. . . . I see no chance of tranquillity and welfare for that impoverished and long distracted land, until the Irish people enjoy the right to which the people of all countries are entitled, namely, to be maintained by the soil that they cultivate by their labour. . . .”

This time, his intuitive reasoning as well as his imaginative eloquence were pressed against him by high-and-dry “common sense,” and he found himself at the bottom of the poll.

Sir Robert Peel came in, and Disraeli’s hopes ran high. Would he rise to the stature of a national leader, settle Ireland, expand alike the institutions and the franchise, and render the House of Commons the express image of the best in every class of the country, instead of a citadel of sectarian class-despotism? Would he refresh the constitutional powers of the Crown and the educative influence of the Church? Would he relieve land of its burdens and toil of its misery? Would he prove not only a re-creator of his party, but a regenerator of society? Perhaps Hercules himself must have despaired :—

“Was it to be a Tory Government or an Enlightened-Spirit-of-the-age-Liberal-Moderate-Reform Government; was it to be a Government of high philosophy or of low practice; of principle or of expediency; of great measures or of little men? A Government of statesmen or of clerks? of Humbug or of Humdrum?”

Peel’s “Tamworth Manifesto” disappointed all





Benj Disraeli.

SKETCH OF DISRAELI THE YOUNGER IN 1835

By Count D'Orsay

termed them “a Government of departments without a centre of union.” In 1835 and 1836 Disraeli pelted them with the running fire of his “Runnymede Letters,”<sup>1</sup> in which he allowed his teeming fancy to run amok and to brandish with sublime recklessness its whole armoury of barbed wit. Palmerston, “a member of Mr. Canning’s Government by necessity; a member of the Duke of Wellington’s by sufferance,” “cajoling France with an airy compliment, and menacing Russia with a perfumed cane”; Russell, who made one understand “why the Egyptians worshipped an insect”; the loitering Melbourne in face of “Eblis with Captain Rock’s bloody cap shadowing his atrocious countenance”—all these and many more figure in these revels, beneath the masks of which are faces keenly discerned and situations deftly analysed; while Peel is adjured to rescue his Sovereign and form a national party. About the same period, too, appeared his *Spirit of Whiggism*, where the libretto of the “Lyndhurst Letter” is set with many variations to the music of impending tragedy. There was real danger, and Disraeli did not exaggerate. An “oligarchical Government” had

<sup>1</sup> Published in the *Times*: a great success. *Fraser's Magazine* repeated in its review Swift’s saying that the appearance of a great genius in the world may always be known by the virulence of the dunces.

by many expedients taken their old refuge in “a Republican cry”; it was a repetition of 1718 and Sunderland’s Peerage Bill. Centralisation with its despotism of bureaucracy might result, and then—“Who will dare disobey London?” Moreover, “The monarchy of the Tories is more democratic than the Republic of the Whigs.” When one remembers the Foxes, Hollands, and Grenvilles, who courted the mob but engrossed power; when one remembers how, earlier, Walpole avowed his mistrust of “the people” (then only “half-born”) as his main argument against repealing the Septennial Act; when, further, one recalls how much Pitt attempted for the people against his own interest, how he relinquished office on the Catholic Question; how, like Solon in Aristophanes,<sup>1</sup> he defended at once ancient liberties and popular privileges (although he cannot be absolved from persecuting licence of speech during national crisis), one feels that it was not merely by force of fantasy that Disraeli read the past into the present, and the present into the future. Nor had his pen paused in the fairy-land of Romance. The *Rise of Iskander* and the luckless *Revolutionary Epick* had appeared in 1834.<sup>2</sup> In 1836 he was intent on *Venetia* with its

<sup>1</sup> “ὁ Σολων ὁ παλαιὸς ἦν φιλόδημος τὴν φύσιν.”

<sup>2</sup> Its re-edition many years later was dedicated to Lord Stanley, afterwards, as Lord Derby, Disraeli’s chief.

dream-pictures of Byron and Shelley, and on *Henrietta Temple*, a “love-story” pure and simple, which contains an inimitable presentiment of the all-accomplished D’Orsay, and which perhaps touched the heart of his future bride ; it was not published till 1837, and his only tragedy, *Alarcos*, followed in 1839. But his pen was never idle. He contributed to Bulwer’s *New Monthly Magazine* and many other periodicals, with some of which the unwearied Lady Blessington was connected. Somewhat later he inscribed in the Stowe album that fine sonnet on the Duke of Wellington.

Mrs. Wyndham Lewis was already deeply interested in Disraeli, whom her husband, the member for Maidstone, liked and welcomed. His union of strength with grace, frankness with subtlety, reticence and reverie with buoyant carelessness, profound thought with spacious fantasy, his dash and daring, his Byronic expression, his belief in his destiny and ideas—all these proved magnetic attractions to many. Among others, one of her friends, the Marquis of Chandos—whose son was ten years later to be set up to speak against Disraeli by Sir Robert *in extremis*—was constantly in his company. Heir to the Duke of Buckingham, he perceived in the young genius one whose native leanings, vivid perceptions, and historical musings would lead him to uphold that varied interest of land which had found its most

generous champions in the commander who defied Walpole outside the House and the Achates who had baffled him within. It is very easy, of course, to read Disraeli's action here, as in 1832, merely as adroit springs on the ascending rungs of a ladder which was to raise him to supreme power; though of the good use he desired to make of power and influence over the thought of his generation there can be little doubt. Opportunism is an open question, if properly raised. Had it been so, he would perhaps have been no worse than many cradled in the purple. All who sail over distant seas are "adventurers"; and as for "upstarts," was not Athene herself an upstart from the head of Zeus? As for the reproach of "Alien," many who have been a country's ruling embodiment have been aliens, not only by origin, but even by birth. So in part was Augustus; so wholly, Mazarin, Alberoni, Ripperda; above all, Napoleon. So in 1871 was Gambetta; and in 1875 Midhat Pacha. Nor must it be forgotten that in the eighteenth century a Scotchman like Bute was looked upon much as an Italian Jew would be at the beginning of the nineteenth. More, too, are "aliens" than the world suspects. Such was Etongh, whose "Conversations" supplied Coxe the historian with Walpole's defence. It is tempting, I repeat, for detraction, for "false charity and real malice" to

construe the constitutional democrat as “Vivian Grey” and the Marquis of Chandos as “the Marquis of Carabas.” But, in surveying his career from start to finish, it seems at once truer, fairer, and more psychological to recognise his wonderful consistency of outlook, and to acknowledge in his outward moves the workings of an imaginative grasp of the ignored past, the misread present, and the neglected future. Bolingbroke—ever present to his mind—had seen the non-fulfilment of the revolution principle, and the perils of oligarchy and Ministerial despotism under the mask of betrayed popular principles, at a time when a sole Minister might destroy both the achieved independence of Parliament and the defined prerogatives of an unarbitrary Crown. He too had headed the peasantry and squirearchy in a national cause, and had sounded the imperial note. Burke, also ever present to his mind, had revenged himself on the exclusive Whigs who had espoused cosmopolitan instead of national democracy, and had hounded his generous and aspiring spirit from their councils. In Disraeli’s inmost recesses a picture of historical Great Britain in a perspective of ideas, since approved by research, and always essential even where deemed fantastic, a foresight of the march of events and the conjunctures of movements, a scheme for the future issuing from intuition, ever

dominated his views and his action. For him, as for all truly great statesmen with breadth of gaze and bigness of purpose, men and measures were always regarded in relation to their ultimate tendencies, and not to their superficial and literal meanings of the moment. Principles are often best applied through a policy which models them into touch with the spirit of the age.

In 1837 died, "like a lion," the sturdy but somewhat stupid King who had been so beset in his determination to choose his Ministers, and who used to ply them with questions about "*the theoretical importance of Persia*"! The young Queen was proclaimed, and appealed to the nation, like Spenser's Una in the thorny tangle of the landscape. The scenes of these stirring months (and afterwards that of the coronation, which he witnessed and graphically described) Disraeli has recorded in charming letters interspersed with witty remembrances of many noted men and women, including Pozzo Borgo and the Montalemberts. The time was fast approaching for him to take his seat in that House which he was to thrill and sway, and to which he was to cherish a life-long devotion. He was nominated as Lewis' colleague at Maidstone. From that place he writes to his sister, at the close of June: ". . . When one feels assured, it is best to be quiet"; on July 27, 11 o'clock—

“ Dearest,  
Lewis, 707.  
Disraeli, 616.  
Colonel Thompson, 412.  
The constituency nearly exhausted.  
In haste,  
DIZZY.”

“ So much,” he had added five days earlier in anticipation, “ for the ‘ maddest of all mad acts,’ my Uncle G.’s prescience, and B.’s unrivalled powers of encouragement.”

On November 15 he took his seat. He lost no time in making his *début*. On December 7 the Irish Elections Petitions affair was before the House : it hinged on a subscription to promote Protestant returns for a country plunged in anarchy. To this Sir Francis Burdett had notably contributed. The maiden speech with its “ The time will come when you *will* hear me,” has been often represented as a failure, but this was not in fact the case. It was praised and cheered alike by Peel<sup>1</sup> and Sheil. It was singled out for approval by a leading article of the leading organ of the press. Its interruption was caused solely by the organised hooting and combination of some of the “ Rads ” and all of the “ Repealers ” below the gangway. It was this fragment of a faction, and not the occupants of

<sup>1</sup> Peel said, “ He did all that he could do under the circumstances.”

the Treasury bench—Russell (the leader of the House), Palmerston (then a pert master of fashion), Morpeth (the suave Secretary for Ireland), Spring-Rice (the dry Chancellor<sup>1</sup>), Molesworth (the dandy of the Utilitarians), Grote the profound, Duncombe “the honest,” Villiers the advanced, Hume the economist—not these who bellowed it down. The passage where it was stopped ran, “Notwithstanding emancipated Ireland and enslaved England, the noble Lord might wave in one hand the keys of St. Peter and in the other—” In the Lobby the Attorney-General asked Disraeli to supply the gap. “In the other, the cap of liberty, Sir John,” was the answer. “He smiled and said, ‘A good picture.’ ”

Four days later Sheil met him by desire at Bulwer’s. His advice was to bide his time, be dry and statistical until the House would sigh for and appreciate his wit. His next speech (April 25, 1838), on Talfourd’s Copyright Act, observed these conditions; and by 1839—the year both of his happy marriage and of Mr. Gladstone’s—he had gained and enchainèd the ear of the House. Speaking in the March of that year on the Irish Municipal Corporations Bill, he was able to press home with eloquence riveting attention his long consistent views upon Represent-

<sup>1</sup> “Erupting with the plenary inspiration of the spirit of the age.”—*Runnymede*.

ation as not confined to election; and in June, when the Education Question came up, he reiterated his persistent ideas in favour of what is national and social as opposed to centralised interference. In 1840 he made a famous oration on “Chartism”—the prelude to *Sybil* :—

“ . . . I am not ashamed to say, however much I disapprove of the Charter, I sympathise with the Chartist ; and it is my opinion that their dissatisfaction has been occasioned by the order of the peasantry having been deprived of their legitimate representation in the third estate by the Reform Bill of 1832. . . . ”

Already he was hailed as eminent ; already he was beginning to animate his surroundings with the conviction, to be pressed home in the unremembered columns of the journal which he directed in the 'fifties, that “ It is enthusiasm alone that gives flesh and blood to the skeleton of abstract opinions ” ; and that, as he has elsewhere put it, “ party ” is but “ organised ” opinion, and Parliament the representative of public opinion, and not merely of private interest. He was already forming the nucleus and ranging the aspirations of “ Young England.” Whatever motives might be fastened on him, his lifelong sympathy with the labouring classes proved unceasing, and indeed was destined to carry many alleviative measures in the teeth of the Radical champions of capital some thirty years afterwards.

The faint breath of the invalid Ministry, "cradled in convulsion," was fast ebbing away. Throughout the ten years preceding and succeeding it, the spectre of Ireland, the ideals of the Church haunted the scene. The most thoughtless were forced to think.<sup>1</sup> And to these two problems were now being added the Corn Laws and the Colonies. "Cobden," Mr. Gladstone predicted, would be "a worrying man on Corn." The leagues both for repeal, agricultural and ecclesiastical, were the natural legacy of Peel's previous indecision. Canada was in rebellion. In 1839 the slavery problem of Jamaica turned out a Government of dilettante enthusiasts of individual merit but collective inanity. But Sir Robert declined to resume the reins unless the Queen consented to part with her Whig ladies. He was repeating the cue of Harley with Queen Anne. Disraeli always held that his chief blundered in not asserting the Sovereign's constitutional right as against Whig dictation before the people, who would have welcomed the remedy. In a speech of this date he derided the "middle party" that was dying to the slow music of "moderate" measures. They reminded him "of the lawyers who ate the oysters and gave the shells to their clients." He vehemently supported Peel in his first no-confidence motion, and upheld his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Press*, 1853.

zeal for the people and the land. The Government—in the close balance of parties—was after all defeated, but refused to resign after the General Election. When Disraeli at length took his seat, now for Shrewsbury, Lord Melbourne's tottering Administration still lingered for a few months, till 1841 ; but—after a defeat on the Sugar Duties—an overwhelming majority for the Opposition in a censuring vote of amendment on the Address gave it not so much a quietus as a funeral. Lord Melbourne resigned, and Sir Robert Peel reigned in his stead. Once more it was not so much a question of “what,” but of “who.” So far the Whigs had settled nothing amid the general unsettlement. The cry of the Chartist was for labour-representation, but it was clear that something must be “done” to cheapen their food, the dearness of which was a part of their misery. The question was to what extent and in what spirit evils not merely physical were to be remedied, and how change was to affect the conditions alike of the employed and their varying employers. The community must not be sacrificed. The Queen’s Government must still be “carried on.”

## CHAPTER III

### 1842-1846—THE DUEL

State of affairs and parties—Peel's position—The real issues—“Young England”—Disraeli's “Trilogy”—Disraeli and Peel—The “Peel Letter”—Peel vacillates—Disraeli's historical bias and basis—Disraeli's three great deliverances on Ireland—The drama of “Free Trade”—The events of 1845 and 1846—Disraeli's action and its causes—The “Edinburgh Letter”—The two sets of Cabinet Councils—Peel resigns but resumes office—Disraeli's philippics—The final scene—The Bill passed, but Peel is defeated on the Coercion Act—Peel's fall—Disraeli's reasons.

IRISH municipal reform and voting registration had technically upset the Whigs, but the no-confidence vote which installed Peel had been largely gained by the harassments of agitation and the fears of the landed interest. “I would sooner,” Peel had proclaimed, “be the leader of the gentlemen of England than possess the confidence of Sovereigns.” The real issue before the English nation was “Chartism,” which

was mainly due to want of distributed employment, though its result was the demand for cheaper food. Pauperism was rampant.<sup>1</sup> Its colossal proportions were never reduced by “repeal,” but rather by the railway enterprise, which afforded an outlet for work. The Whigs, however, conceived that the protection of grain was the root of the evil, and they would have settled the question by a fixed duty on corn. Neither of the two great parties contemplated a total repeal of the Corn Laws; and indeed the price of corn was considerably lower than it had been for a number of years, or was to be again till 1849.<sup>2</sup> There prevailed great depression in the reigning centres both commercial and agricultural; and the people, tired of men whom it refused to trust, looked for wise moderation to the statesman who for the fourth time was enjoying the confidence of the court and the country. Peel, with the Conservatives, borne into power on the wave of reaction, was now generally supposed to have triumphed for the term of his natural life. The Whigs seemed annihilated. In Disraeli’s phrase,

<sup>1</sup> In 1841-42, 1,500,000 were on the rates, 83,000 able-bodied men in the workhouse. In 1846, when the foreign “Zollverein” duties caused renewed distress at home, wages were reduced by the yarn manufacturers—J. Bright & Co., of Rochdale, among the rest.

<sup>2</sup> In 1841 corn was at 64s.; in 1842, at 50s.

their party “was spoken of as a corpse; it was treated as a phantom.”<sup>1</sup>

But a third group had recently fastened the public attention—not a party but a confederation—the Manchester school. The heroes of the Anti-Corn-Law League taught that a complete removal of all duties on all imports was the real antidote for the crying ills. To buy in the cheapest market and to sell in the dearest would prove the salvation of society; wealth meant the national welfare, and “physical happiness” would soon quiet the fever. But their object was not only to feed the people, but also to erect the manufacturers into a governing class,<sup>2</sup> and perhaps even to make trade override land. When capital clashed with labour they were on the side of capital, as was shown long afterwards by their opposition to the many alleviative measures carried by Disraeli and by Lord Shaftesbury. It should not be forgotten, however, that both Cobden’s “League” and Sir Robert, after he adopted its notions, considered that repeal would never permanently injure the land. These preachers of doctrines at once bustling and abstract went at this period unacknowledged by either of the two great parties. Neither Peel, the Duke of Wellington,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> There was a correspondence between Cobden and Peel to this effect.

Lord Melbourne, nor Lord John Russell, would recognise them. It was generally admitted that, since the Reform Bill had more than ever constituted Parliament a tribunal of public opinion, party cleavage must more than ever be kept sharp and distinct. Disraeli, an enthusiast for parties, was under no such illusion as to facts. He was the first to perceive that one or other of the traditional parties must adopt something of a policy that appealed to the materialism of want.

Sir Robert Peel gave no specific pledges on his accession to power. He resolved, however, not to make any attempt to enlarge the representation of 1832, but to confine his policy to retrenchment at home and peace abroad. He felt that the moment had come for a revision of our fiscal and commercial systems, and to this task he bent all his energies.

What was shortly to be styled “Free Trade” really involved three distinct issues, with which I shall presently deal, and which, as is usual, gradually became confused by the warfare of classes, the ambition of tribunes, and the interests of partisans. These always attach an exaggerated weight to means, which are, after all, only reversible expedients. It was a statesman’s duty rather to assuage and prevent a malady which increased competition might even aggravate, if

once labour should be displaced and dislocated for the sake of cheapness.<sup>1</sup>

A policy of reducible tariffs as a lever for reciprocal treaties of commerce had long been known as "Fair" or "Free" Trade, and had been sanctioned alike by Bolingbroke, by Walpole, by Pitt and Liverpool. During the Napoleonic wars restrictions on the importation of grain had been wholly removed for a time, and bread was never dearer than for the greater part of this period.

Peel had hitherto followed in the footsteps of historical statesmen. As regards corn, he upheld the sliding scale with modifications, in which he was aided by Mr. Gladstone, who already united the temperament of the Lowlander to that of the Highlander, and the Anglicanism of Oxford to the economy of Liverpool. As regards the tariff, Peel at once wisely abated the duties on a vast number both of necessaries and commodities, while, to compensate revenue, he reintroduced the income-tax. He was still in favour of reciprocity, and in 1843 he granted a preference to Canadian wheat. With this attitude Disraeli, who was for reci-

<sup>1</sup> Gladstone himself admitted that the war caused the miseries of 1815. In 1843 he pointed out to Peel that it would not be wise to *displace labour* for the sake of cheap corn without the abolition of tariffs to counteract it (Morley's *Gladstone*, i. p. 262). It seems that Gladstone too was educating Peel into "free imports."

prosperity and the sliding scale, was in cordial agreement. Disraeli considered the standpoint of the Manchester school intelligent and intelligible, but, if ever they succeeded in carrying their policy of free imports, he doubted the ultimate efficacy of their social anodyne. Not many years later he predicted that, while it would cripple the land and the moral ties and many political securities connected with land, it was not likely to prove a permanent blessing for industry. To fight hostile tariffs with free imports, and by the same stroke to waste the acreage of England, might temporarily benefit a class, but would involve disaster in the end. The dislocation of labour would be trebled, the crowded towns would overflow, continental competition might arise, and what was above wealth, the *morale*, the character, the physique of the population, would be impaired, while, if the manufacturing magnates became our governors, an era of plutocracy would set in. From the mere standpoint of figures he held that, while theoretically the removal of every sort of protection was not unsound, it would be practically most pernicious if accompanied by the complete removal of tariff duties. England if she gave should also take ; and if the land were to be abandoned to the mercies of unrestricted competition, at anyrate its especial burdens must first in fairness be abolished.

I have said that there were three issues before the country, approached in opposite spirits by parties professing to represent all classes.

There was the question of the Corn Laws—then fully as much a rural and a rent question as an industrial one. There was the question of lowering the duties on many articles of exchange which might still enable Government to negotiate on the basis of reciprocity—a question at once fiscal, commercial, and industrial. But the most important problem of all was how changes in these directions would affect or arrest the misery of toil, whether in the growing towns or in the depressed counties, and how the drift of social displacement should be met. This was the “Condition of England” question, and it included all the rest. It was the rankling wound ; the others were only relatively urgent—as its poultices.

Disraeli regarded the whole problem as radically social—touching labour at the one extreme and leadership at the other. Sir Robert took his great plunge as a convert to the “physical equality” system. By adopting the “right to physical happiness” theory of Manchester at the very moment when he dislocated labour by Repeal, he was in fact inconsistent ; for, as Disraeli was to point out at Glasgow in 1873, that doctrine of “physical equality” implies the “un-

limited employment of labour," if the rights of private property are not to be abolished; while that "unlimited employment" again makes for the ruin of the national idea—is cosmopolitan, and "strikes at the principle of patriotism."<sup>1</sup> This Disraeli perceived. He viewed the question partly in relation to employment. If the workman was to feed more cheaply, he might also get less to earn his means of purchase, whereas the middle class would reap the benefit without the burden. Partly in relation to land. The repeal of the Corn Laws meant the transference of population to the towns, and a disorganisation of labour. An incomplete Reform Bill, the new Poor Law, the indifference of Society, the effects of new machinery, had alike injured the workman. The need was for community of purpose and of feeling. And he sought to achieve it through his vision of "Young England." It was a cause which aimed at infusing enthusiasm into tradition, and at enlisting the "light and leading" of youth, who are "the trustees of posterity"; a cause, too,

<sup>1</sup> ". . . The social system must be established on some principle; and therefore for the rights of property they would substitute the rights of labour. Now these cannot be fully enjoyed if there be any limit to employment. The great limit to employment . . . to the physical and material equality of man, is found in the division of the world into states and nations. Thus . . . physical equality . . . is prepared to abrogate countries. . . ."

associated with the Church revival of the seven years preceding, which had led the thoughtful to see in that Church's ideal a society of believers instead of a league of mere assenters. Everywhere was a renaissance—an awakening. He believed in the virtue of quickened institutions, in sympathy and society rather than in the mechanism of the State. He thought that the Church and the nobles should revive as realities, justify their privileges, and exert their "healing power" both as leaders and as educators. Though feudalism was exploded, he believed in its great principle, that the tenure of property rests on the fulfilment of duties, as a regenerative power. Labour and property were partners, and their rights should be equal. Industry should be protected and raised above its squalor of home and life by a Capital quickened to its duties. There should be a sympathetic bond and some identity of interest between employers and employed. The rich and the poor should not remain "two nations," but be drawn together, and both humanised. The true captains of industry should not be ambitious agitators, but earnest gentlemen. Such an awakening dawn—if now the "gleam" was but a glimmer—boded the promise of a new day. The wealth of England was only a part of its welfare, which was largely bound up with a system of land which,

while securing liberty by local government, brought the peasantry into close relations with the proprietors ; and, in the towns, even from the economist's point of view, "Nothing is so expensive as a vicious population." Moreover, he conceived that the Crown, as above and beyond classes, the symbol of sympathy and loyalty as well as of majesty and law, should prove the most popular engine for reconciling a rebellious multitude to order. This part of the theme, together with that of the essential origins of parties, he developed in *Coningsby* (1844) and in *Sybil* (1845). The Church also was for him divine, a Semitic theocracy,<sup>1</sup> the guardian of eternal truths ; but in England it was also national and social, secular as well as sacred. It should be a pledge for sympathy, for tolerance, for training. Divorced from it, the State would suffer, and sectarian bigotry abound ; it was no salaried police of Government. It too might raise and help the people, teaching them that "equality" is no human "right," but is found only in "the fatherhood of God." This portion of his theme Disraeli emphasised in *Tancred* (1847). "I see no other remedy," he wrote to the *Times* in 1843, "for that war of classes and

<sup>1</sup> His conviction that Christianity came to fulfil and not only to abolish the fatal exclusiveness of Judaism was derived from his father's views expressed in *The Genius of Judaism*.

creeds which now agitates and menaces us, but in an earnest return to a system which may be described generally as one of loyalty and reverence, of popular rights and social sympathies.”<sup>1</sup> He thought that the political development of the Revolution principle ought never to have subserved the crabbed tyranny of Puritanism.

Such in outline was the gospel of “Young England,” recruited by young peers, young poets, and young zealots. It was a spirit rather than a scheme. It found free expression in the fantasies of George Smythe, seventh Lord Strangford, its finest in *Sybil*, dedicated by Disraeli to his wife. Its revival of heroism and chivalry in fantastic shapes irritated many, and especially the commercial “middles,” who resented the “flummery” of the Middle Ages. But its visionary lesson coincides with Carlyle’s, and it has borne permanent fruit. Above all, its practical tendencies were for a strong Government, and Disraeli held that without a strong Government permanent welfare would be damaged in England.

Peel’s Administration had included Gladstone (shortly preferred to the Council and the Cabinet), Stanley and Graham (now at length Conservatives), “old hacks” behind the scenes like Goulburn and “Grannie” Somerset. Buckingham had been there for land, and Aberdeen for “auld

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mr. Kebbel’s *Selected Speeches*, i. 284.

lang syne." Patricians abounded; but Disraeli's claims were ignored, although his warm friend and admirer, Lyndhurst, was Chancellor, and had doubtless exerted himself on his behalf. It was a bitter disappointment, indeed an affront, because Peel's triumph was now considered permanent. Peel had acknowledged Disraeli's *Vindication* with formal praise, had met him at Chandos' and treated him "with more than civility," had praised his efforts, had even encouraged—but had not rewarded him. Palmerston, the jaunty servant of seven differing Ministries, soon twitted the member for Shrewsbury—as Disraeli became in 1841—with the crime of having "solicited" preferment in vain.<sup>1</sup>

What seems really to have happened, before Peel had completed his list, appears to be this. One of the Cabinet (probably Sir James Graham) called on Disraeli to intimate that Peel was disposed to give him office. Acting on this cue, Mrs. Disraeli (perhaps unknown to her husband) and Disraeli himself addressed Peel. These letters were first disclosed by the publication of the "Peel Papers." Nothing was done, but during 1846 the whole matter was threshed out in the House. Disraeli, be it marked, not only indignantly denied having "applied," but referred to this very letter and the incidents preceding and prompting it. The letter he owned, but he

<sup>1</sup> This episode is known as that of the "Peel Letter."

traversed the imputation. Sir Robert denied that he had ever "authorised" the offer. This seems undoubtedly the case. "The Right Honourable Baronet," urged Disraeli, "never authorises anybody or anything." It was a mistake, but it was also a misfortune; and if the insinuations current had been true, Disraeli added that he would never have risen in that House again.

Here once more the taunt of unworthy time-service lies open, as well as the sting of revenge in the coming onslaught. No one, however, who reviews impartially Disraeli's whole career can charge him with servility. He was nothing if not unpopularly independent. "Independence," he was to tell the Bucks electors in 1847, "is the essential element of my political position. . . . I have not gained the position which I am proud to remember I occupy there but by my own individual exertions. It has cost me days of thought and nights of toil, frequent discomfiture, and many unequal contests. I have gained that position by myself, and I must maintain it by myself." Nor, again, have his worst enemies ever convicted him of pettiness. Instances of generous magnanimity will appear as we proceed. And just as in his style the sweep of phrase expressed sweep of mind and was never a large screen for small thoughts, so it was in his deeds. Un-

doubtedly, like all great political men of action, who are ever mixed characters, he made many errors, as he himself avowed, but the real evidence acquits him of sordid or paltry motives. It must be remembered also that the letter's date shows it to have been written after Peel's Ministry was fully formed, and at an interval when Disraeli was relieved from the pressing motive of financial embarrassment which had cramped him in 1837, and was still somewhat to hamper him until 1853.<sup>1</sup>

Peel, by the law of his being, soon began to yield to the popular spell of the Manchester doctrines. After some two years of hesitation, when he distinctly excepted the Corn Laws and Sugar Duties from his approval of "the general principles" of Free Trade, because their inclusion would irreparably injure "great national and colonial interests," he paused. But for the events of 1845 he would probably have gone on "educating" the country through the young Gladstone. His eye was on party as well as on policy. In 1843 both he and Gladstone favoured Canadian "retaliation" on America. In 1846 the English Corn Law was repealed; and during the three years following, the Sugar Duties and the Navigation Laws were undone by the very Whigs who joined in ensuring Peel's final over-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mr. Frederick Greenwood's "Life" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*).

throw. But even in 1843 Peel had secretly,<sup>1</sup> though conscientiously, determined to cast partial measures overboard and to swallow the whole dose. He only awaited pretext and opportunity.

Till 1843 Disraeli supported Peel. His speech (1841) on the Sugar Duties drew Peel's applause,<sup>2</sup> and in 1842 he too recorded his vote against Mr. Villiers' wonted motion for total repeal. But he was perhaps the first to sight the veering of the weathercock. In 1844 he told an incredulous House that Protection was in the same plight as Protestantism had been in 1828, and a little later he assured Louis Philippe, who desired Peel's maintenance, that Peel would carry his Bill and then—fall. But already the rumoured vacillations and still more the frigid and sometimes hectoring demeanour of the proud Minister were putting a strain on many of his supporters, and especially the talented enthusiasts for "Young England," whom Peel tried to muzzle. They did not relish being lectured, or referred to a Railway Committee! Two leading articles in two leading organs of the press commented on Peel's attitude towards youthful exuberance, and praised Disraeli while they rebuked his chief.

In 1843, writing to refute certain criticisms of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his attitude, 1843 (*Morley's Gladstone*, i. p. 262).

<sup>2</sup> "Iron tears from Pluto's cheek." Cf. *Lord Beaconsfield's Correspondence*, p. 171.

the *Times*, he thus sums up the historical bias and basis of his opinions :—

“ I voted for the industrial measures of Sir Robert Peel last year and defended them during the present, and still believe that they were founded on sound principles of commercial policy [*i.e.* Reciprocity] ; principles . . . advocated by that great Tory statesman Lord Bolingbroke in 1713 ; principles which, in abeyance during the Whig Government of seventy years, were revived by that great Tory statesman Mr. Pitt ; and though their progress was disturbed by war and revolution, . . . sanctioned and developed, on the return of peace and order, by Lord Liverpool. It is not merely with reference to commercial policy that I believe that a recurrence to *old* Tory principles would be a great advantage to this country. It is a specific in my opinion, and the only one, for many of those disquietudes which now perplex our Society. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

The drama (for such it was) heightened in 1845, when the great duel between two personalities, strangely repeating that between St. John and Harley, began ; but meanwhile the gaunt wraith of Ireland once more cast its chill shadow athwart the scene. On this subject Disraeli made three great speeches, the second of which was belauded by Macaulay, and so late as 1867 commended by Gladstone.

Ireland was distracted and disturbed. Peel had dropped his remedial tack, and in the summer of 1843 brought in an “ Arms’ Bill ” instead. Disraeli rose in August as “ Young

Cf. Kebbel’s *Selected Speeches*, i. p. 284.

England's" exponent. He showed that Peel's conduct left them as Independents on this unhappy problem, which ought never to be partisan ; that for seventy years the Whig policy had been one of intolerance and coercion ; that the Toryism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had always been conciliatory to the rival churches of Ireland ; and that the "descendants of the Cavaliers" were inconsistent in "governing Ireland on the repressive principles of the Roundheads." He sketched the inevitable Cabinet dissensions by one of which, some twenty years earlier, Peel himself had risen to power. Afterwards, on Canning's death, "all the suppressed and evil passions broke forth. It was in a different spirit that Ireland's wrongs should be redressed. . . . You must reorganise and reconstruct the government and even the social state of Ireland." It was not "by mere empirical remedies" that her "peace and contentment could be compassed." Parties tinkered with the terrible tissue of grievance. The present measure was "contemptible" :—

"It was not by satisfying agitators—not by adopting, in despair, the first quack remedy that was offered from either side, . . . but by really penetrating into the mystery of this great misgovernment, so as to bring about a state of society . . . advantageous both to England and Ireland, and which would put an end to a state of things that was the bane of England and the opprobrium of Europe."

In the next year he again recurred to the pressing problem. It was a complex one—monotony and want of employment (as in England), with which mere tariff legislation was powerless to cope;<sup>1</sup> the flames of Church rivalry, caused by Puritanism, not Protestantism, and extinguishable neither by disestablishment nor by direct endowment, but by Pitt's policy of State aid to the unendowed clergy; the land difficulty, which the landlords themselves must remedy. Ireland's evils were physical and social even more than historical and sentimental. There was "a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church," and yet the proposed offers were always "some little thing in a great way," always "identity of institutions" with England. That was just what least suited Ireland. Statesmen should "create public opinion," not follow it; "lead the public, instead of always lagging after and watching others." The immediate need was a strong Government, a really representative Executive; thus only can social reconstruction be achieved and security found for the introduction of capital. An English Minister should effect by policy "all those changes which a revolution would do by force"—create, not destroy. Otherwise Repeal of the Union would be imminent, and Repeal would be fatal:—

<sup>1</sup> Lord George Bentinck devised in 1846 a scheme for railway employment in Ireland. Cf. *Disraeli's Life*, p. 248.

“ . . . I want to see a public man come forward and say what the Irish Question is. One says it is a physical question, another a spiritual. . . . It is the Pope one day, potatoes the next. Let us consider Ireland as we should any other country similarly situated. . . . Then we shall see a teeming population, . . . with reference to the cultivated soil . . . denser to the square mile than that of China ; created solely by agriculture, with none of those sources of wealth . . . developed with civilisation, and sustained consequently upon the lowest conceivable diet, so that in case of failure they have no other means of subsistence upon which they can fall back. And in distress this population is confronted with alien institutions and the ‘weakest executive in the world.’ . . . There is no possible way by which the *physical* condition of the people can be improved by Act of Parliament. The moment you have a strong Executive, a just administration, and ecclesiastical equality, you will have order in Ireland, and the improvement of the physical condition . . . will follow—not very rapidly perhaps . . . but what are fifty years even in the history of a nation? . . .”

His last deliverance was in April 1845 with regard to Peel’s proposed dole to the Maynooth Catholic College—the proposal which in February had made Gladstone temporarily “leap out of his government to follow his book,” and request a mission to the Vatican. Peel had proposed a paltry grant—“three in a bed instead of two” (so Disraeli derided it), and as usual there were “three courses open.” He founded this particular one on Perceval’s grant. Perceval was an unhappy instance, that of an ultra-Protestant at a time when Parliament was virgin in its Protest-

antism. This was essentially a Church question, but it tinkered with it. “The Right Honourable gentleman tells us to go back to precedents; with him a great measure is always founded on a small precedent. He traces the steam-engine always back to the steam kettle.” The principle was one which might be applied equally to Scotland. It was not a liberal measure nor one acceptable to the Catholics.<sup>1</sup> “You find your Erastian system crumbling from under your feet”:

“ . . . I deny that the Church of England is the creature of the State. The alliance between them has been one formed and maintained upon equal terms; and if it be attempted . . . to place all ecclesiastical affairs under the control of Downing Street and to subject them to the same species of discipline that is enforced in Russia over the religious establishments there, I tell the Right Honourable gentleman that the people of this country will never endure such a system. . . .”

This speech enforcing the anti-Erastian principles of “Young England,” yet by a curious coincidence broke up the “Young England” brotherhood.

The Opposition was silent. “Split into sections, it agreed only in affording the Ministerial system a forced and grim approbation.” Peel was fast becoming “a sole Minister.” And

<sup>1</sup> In 1850 the Pope denounced what old Tories like Inglis called its “godless education” as “fatal to faith and morals.”

although, as Disraeli sarcastically observed of his "three courses," there was always the course he had left, the course he pursued, and usually the course he ought to follow, Peel still reigned supreme. But already the duel between him and Disraeli had begun—between the orthodox idol and the mocking heretic who disdained to bow the knee. In the scenes to follow, when dramatic strokes precipitated what Peel hoped, by wavering, to delay, Disraeli, it is clear from after utterances,<sup>1</sup> had a definite purpose. He discerned that Peel's present "conservatism" was "an organised hypocrisy"; that, however long the unconscious process might take, Peel's leading spirits were Manchester Radicals by bent even if not by disposition; that the Whigs had abandoned their ancient colours, and that eventually the contest must lie between "national" Conservatism and international Liberalism; in a word, between strong government based on habitual institutions, and weak agitations ruffling the surface without steadyng the ship or allaying the storm. In devising Peel's downfall he intended that these inevitable issues should be delayed for as short a space as possible. It was one of those "transitional" periods when old names form the labels for very different bottles; it would be well to call

<sup>1</sup> Among many others, his brilliant contributions to *The Press* (1853).

them by their right names. And in his subsequent attacks Disraeli perceived very clearly the irony of sainted enthusiasts turning political agnostics. In 1846 he told Hobhouse that Peel would break up any party that he had to do with.<sup>1</sup> In England party stands for the pugnacity of opinion, and it is only by the pugnacity of opinion that free discussion can be stimulated and secured.

Towards the close of 1845 an apprehended potato famine in Ireland caused horror-stricken sympathy. Nature and man alike combined together against her, and the peasant would have to choose between starvation and assassination. Peel summoned his Cabinet early in November and proposed by an order in Council a temporary suspension of the Corn Laws and opening of the ports. Four Cabinet Councils in one week perplexed Europe, alarmed the Tuilleries, and set politicians at home intriguing and manœuvring. In the Cabinet was dissension. The Irish disaster had not yet occurred. The Irish cotters had by their oats some means of purchase, and what was needed by them was such means, and not a reduction of price. The measure was at once premature and procrastinating. It would operate too late. Both Lord Stanley and the Duke of Wellington protested, and a precautionary Commission was therefore

<sup>1</sup> Morley's *Gladstone*, i. p. 289.

appointed. On November 6 the Ministers dispersed.

Twelve days afterwards Lord John Russell addressed his "Edinburgh Letter" to the citizens of London—a bolt from the blue. Impatient of half-measures, he deemed that the clock was at last pointed to the Whig moment. He threw over the "fixed duty," competed with the Manchesterians, forestalled Peel, and demanded total Repeal.

What a situation! The Cabinet was again summoned to heated and contending councils. Should Sir Robert outbid Lord John by adopting his extreme policy? Or could he excogitate some middle plan? He afterwards told Parliament that, however much he approved Repeal, he was not the man to propose it. But we now know that, before Lord John Russell was sent for by his sovereign, Peel in these late November Councils, after submitting an alternative, not previously disclosed, for a "vanishing scale," ended by indorsing the sudden policy of the Whig leader.<sup>1</sup> It was not the Irish but the Edinburgh crisis that decided him. He afterwards "abjured party" as a sacrifice on the altar of conviction. But at this critical moment he thought himself strong enough to carry his measure and hold

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Morley's *Gladstone*, i. p. 286. This fully bears out Disraeli's views in his *Life of Bentinck*, pp. 21, 22.

his party together.<sup>1</sup> In deference to his landed supporters he was to "make the best terms." Stanley went out in disgust and despair. The Government was broken up, and Peel resigned.

On December 8 the Queen summoned Lord John, who, however, found himself unable to form an Administration. For eight days the Queen and the country lacked a Government. Then Peel resumed the reins of a power now after all proved impregnable. He had contrived to "repique" the Whigs "by a bold discard of the suit" they "had counted on his retaining."<sup>2</sup> But he was to destroy his own party by outwitting theirs. The Duke of Wellington sank all private opinion and feeling under his conviction that "the Queen's Government must be carried on." If the Whigs could not rally their forces, Cobden's eoterie should never be allowed to gain power and themselves pass their own projects—that was flat!

Parliament assembled on January 22 amid the hush of expectation. In the Upper House Wellington seems to have prevented Stanley's explanations. In the Lower, the thrill of excitement culminated when the great Prime Minister rose. His speech was long and involved. He began by a deluge of trade statistics which almost

<sup>1</sup> Morley's *Gladstone*, i. p. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Disraeli in *The Press* (1853).

persuaded the Protectionists that nothing had occurred and that their temperature was normal. He passed to a recital in which the Councils on either side of the date of the "Edinburgh Letter" were tangled together. And when he reached the business in hand, he addressed his party in a tone of threatening dictatorship. It was difficult to reconcile "an ancient monarchy and a proud aristocracy with a reformed constituency." He had enjoyed the confidence of four sovereigns. They must take it or leave it. He appealed to "posterity." While the majority were dumfounded and cowed, Lord George Bentinck (the relative and former secretary of Canning) glowered in his place, his associate Disraeli seized the psychological moment and sprang to his feet. The speech was electric and voiced the Protectionist wrath. Apart from the merits of proposals fraught with perilous uncertainty and sprung on the country in a political dilemma by the chief who at anyrate should have yielded the task to others, the landed interest had been betrayed. Peel, like the Turkish admiral commissioned to equip a fleet blessed by all the muftis, had steered his armament into the enemy's port; and for the same reason—a conscientious objection to war. His earlier plan, his thriving babe so dandled and fondled, had been dashed to pieces by its very nurse—one,

too, “of a very orderly demeanour; not given to drink, and never showing any emotion, except of late, when kicking against Protection.” Under the Constitution, Parliamentary confidence was not to be despised. Every leader gains his position in the country by it. And it is impossible to carry on a Parliamentary Constitution save by political parties. Consult posterity if you will (though “posterity is a limited assembly”), but do not bully your party into consulting it with you: otherwise England would soon mourn “a servile senate.” “The Minister who attained as he did the position which the Right Honourable Baronet now fills is not the Minister who ought to abrogate the Corn Laws.” Were his supporters mere drags on his wheel? And was it posterity or the poll that precipitated his conversion, after the question had been before his official mind in every possible shape for a quarter of a century?

“ . . . We went on ‘registering,’ and the Right Honourable gentleman went on making Protection speeches—a great orator before a green table beating a red box. . . . My conception of a great statesman is of one who represents a great idea . . . an idea which he may and can impress on the mind and conscience of a nation. . . . That is a grand, that is indeed an heroic position. But I care not what may be the position of a man who never originates an idea—a watcher of the atmosphere. . . . Such a man may be a powerful Minister, but he is no more a great statesman

than the man who gets up behind a carriage is a great whip. Both are disciples of progress; both perhaps may get a good place, but . . . how far their guiding prudence regulates the lash of the rein it is not necessary for me to notice."

During this whole year and the next Disraeli beset both Peel and his policy in a series of philippics perhaps unrivalled for invective, for lightness of fence, for close reasoning, for extraordinary power in summing up argument, situation, and character.<sup>1</sup> They were as solid as they were brilliant. They were, said Gladstone, looking back in 1891, "quite as wonderful as report makes them. Peel, altogether helpless in reply, dealt with them with a kind of 'righteous dullness.'"<sup>2</sup> The same man who compared the defection of some of the Peelites to Charlemagne's conversion of the Saxons on the banks of the Rhine,—"They were converted in battalions and baptized in platoons,"—who denounced Peel's attitude to his supporters and to Cobden<sup>3</sup> as that of the protector of a mistress in distress, who sends down his valet to announce "we will have no whining here," Peel's career as "one long

<sup>1</sup> Gladstone applauds his gift of summarising "with brilliancy, buoyancy, and comprehensiveness" in 1850, and speaks of the listener's "delight of the ear and the fancy." Morley, i. p. 356.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, iii. p. 465.

<sup>3</sup> Alluding to Cobden's motion for a select committee of inquiry into the *alleged* agricultural distress.

appropriation clause," and Peel himself as one "who had bought his party in the cheapest market and sold it in the dearest," was the man who also analysed the most complicated statistics with unerring acuteness, who proved in detail that no foreign nation would enter the scheme, that the promised compensations to the land were illusory, that the prediction that corn would still maintain its price was absolutely fallacious, that decultivation of the soil must follow and ultimately aggravate the industrial evils, that foreign competition would one day press heavily on the very manufacturers who designed to benefit, that, moreover, the effect of new discoveries of the precious metals in raising prices was ignored, that a debased *physique* and *morale* of overcrowded cities would injure the means of prosperity in war and in peace, that colonial empire might be endangered, that if the intoxication of an "economic frenzy" was to cause the act which he resisted, a Plutocracy must one day arise which only an educated and enfranchised multitude could counteract. For many of Sir Robert Peel's noble though not commanding qualities, his consummate talents with an audience that he understood, Disraeli has recorded a sincere esteem.<sup>1</sup> An

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the wonderful diagnosis in chap. xvii. of the *Life of Lord George Bentinck*. For Cobden Disraeli had the greatest

honourable man with conservative instincts, yet none unconsciously more forwarded revolution to destroy the institutions he longed to safeguard than Peel.<sup>1</sup> But this—though no party warfare, for even victory might probably leave the small band of dissentients hopeless—was a duel to the death, and no quarter was shown on either side. Disraeli was over-savage, but he was single-handed, and he had all the established and immaculate forces arrayed against him. The Whigs exulted. Disraeli's dazzling fusillade was applauded in all their clubs and drawing-rooms; and even staunch and official Peelites, like Sir James Graham, acknowledged that what the Protectionists (or rather the adherents of Reciprocity) were doing

admiration, which was returned, and indeed from 1846 to 1881 there are only three great statesmanlike figures, Cobden, Disraeli, and Gladstone. Disraeli considered Cobden the sole commanding figure that “the purely middle-class section of this country has produced.” In his “*Athenæum*” speech he bantered Cobden most gracefully about Greek culture and the Ilissus. Both Cobden and Disraeli could afford to be generous and grateful.

<sup>1</sup> “The Roman Catholic Association, the Birmingham Union, the Manchester League, were all the legitimate offspring of Sir Robert Peel. No Minister ever diminished the power of government in this country so much as this eminent man. No one ever strained the Constitution so much. . . . In an ordinary period he would have been a perfect Minister, but he was not a Minister for stormy times.”—*Life of Lord George Bentinck*, p. 223.

"was done under great provocation ; that it was no wonder they regarded themselves as betrayed ; and that unfortunately it had been the fate of Sir R. Peel to perform the same operation twice."<sup>1</sup> Peel himself owned that his purpose must wreck his party, and this consideration deterred him from ever seeking to reconstitute it again.

In June 1846 the struggle was to close, but the weak Governments and balanced parties of ten years past were not to cease without an effort, or in a moment.

On the third reading of the Bill Disraeli made a supreme performance ; but the dramatic *dénouement* was reserved for the interval between that third reading and the Bill's return from the Upper House. No effort was spared to lead a forlorn hope, and Lord George Bentinck, who regarded Peel both as the destroyer of his kinsman<sup>2</sup> and his party, was vehement in his assistance. Delay and protraction of debate were requisite if the Government was to be routed in its hour of triumph. A diversion therefore was made by an attack on Peel's past relations to Canning. It was asserted that, not only in 1828, but as early as in 1825, the veering Peel had declared his

<sup>1</sup> Morley's *Gladstone*, i. p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> He was prompted by the revelations made by the enraged Lady Canning in 1828. Cf. Greville, i. 127.

conversion to Catholic emancipation. Into the merits of these details I need not enter. The earlier date did not affect the argument, nor did the citations by Disraeli from forgotten reports alter the general opinion. Disraeli himself generously acknowledged in his *Life of Lord George Bentinck* that he had come to think that the discrepancies between Peel's speeches and his after-statements in this regard were due to imperfect or garbled transcriptions. But none the less the probably later publication of the "Wellington Papers" tended to confirm Disraeli's earlier view. Peel's defence was lame and hesitating.

Meanwhile, since the Protectionist muster was too scanty to avail alone in the division against the Government, not a compact but a tacit understanding (though even so much was denied by Lord John Russell) seems to have been informally arrived at to defeat Peel on his Irish Coercion Bill; and the Whigs, by whose aid alone Peel was able to achieve his scheme, were now to ensure his downfall.

For these tactics there was good reason. The measure had been supported by the Whigs some months before on the ground of urgency alone; but it had been starved for months to feed the numberless debates on the Corn Repeal Act, very much as some century and a half before Marl-

borough had starved the Spanish campaign to feed his ambition in the Netherlands. The fact that it was not urgent was proved by its long delay. Moreover, it was one of the worst of Coercion Bills. Peel with his army of one hundred and seventeen could not carry on the Government, and to back a bad Bill in order to keep an impossible Minister in office was absurd.<sup>1</sup> The great Bill had been passed, and yet the Government was uneasy. All eyes were fixed on the Irish debate, which was animated and recriminatory. The division was awaited with keen anxiety on both sides. It was undoubtedly a division of party vengeance. Disraeli has painted with a master pen how the Manners, the Somersets, the Bentincks, the Lowthers and the Lennoxes defiled before the great Minister who at the age of sixty had felt “that the star of Manchester seemed, as it were, to rise from the sunset of Oxford” and had cast a slur on that party connection without which he knew that the “Parliamentary Government he so much admired, of which he had experience, and by which he had

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli always maintained that coercion was only excusable as a cautery for corrosive sedition, and that it had too often been used to suppress mere agitation. He used to instance Pitt as an example of when force should be used for crisis, and how it should be withheld from mere excitement.

risen . . . would be at the same time the weakest and most corrupt Government in the world."

"When Prince Metternich was informed at Dresden with great ostentation that the Emperor had arrived—'Yes, but without his army,' was the reply." Sir Robert was still on his pinnacle, but he was without his army. He had been beaten by seventy-three, and Lord John Russell, who aided the rout, was to rise on his proud ruin. The extreme views that Peel was a martyr and Disraeli an assassin are neither of them true. Disraeli in these times of stress, social and political, recognised the absolute necessity for a strong Government. Peel was honourable, conscientious, and most capable, but for times of stress he was unfit. He was at once stiff and pliable. He let the ship drift to the agitating winds whose movements he ignored ; yet he still grasped the rudder. From his inmost heart he had done the right thing, but he had done what he thought the right thing in what he knew to be the wrong way. Nor was Disraeli's triumph merely personal. He has well said that Peel was "the unconscious parent of agitation," and all its "leagues" were his legitimate "offspring." It was, broadly speaking, and apart from all films of contemporary prejudice, for attaching the people to a strong Government founded on free institutions that Disraeli fought and won. But

the immediate victory could not lead him to immediate power. "There is a certain distance at which opinions as well as statues must be viewed," wrote Disraeli's father. I venture to think that at this distance the calm light of history will so display these central figures.

## CHAPTER IV

### 1846-1852—AFTER THE DELUGE

The state of parties—The Cobdenites—The “Peelites” characterised—The Whigs—Palmerston—The *débâcle* of 1848—Disraeli’s efforts to rally the Conservatives—The “four Budgets”—Colonial unrest—“Don Pacifico”—Ecclesiastical Tithes Bill—The Jew Bill and Disraeli—Disraeli “educates” on the franchise—Peel’s death—Palmerston and the *coup d'état*—The Government goes out—Disraeli Chancellor in the Derby Cabinet—Disraeli’s magnanimity.

THE adroit, the intellectual, but the timid and luckless Lord John Russell reaped the fruits of this triumph; but Peel’s downfall, as Disraeli meant, had not only scattered his own “Conservative” party. It had transformed the Whigs. They were no longer a group of governing families; the Canningite leaven had overcome the lump, while the Manchester school had also imparted to them something of a *doctrinaire* tinge. Moreover, that school itself was by no means organised, and was still eyed askance

by the “Peelites.” After the Bill was passed at the pedestal from which the presiding torso was about to tumble, Peel himself had publicly paid the debt of acknowledgment to Cobden; but none had resented the tribute more than his own followers, most notably Gladstone and Graham. Peel refused absolutely to serve again, and the Peelites, mentored by Aberdeen and soon to be led by the supreme Gladstone and the elegant Sidney Herbert, formed themselves into a sort of sacrosanct coterie, holding themselves aloof and apart. High as their standard was, they affected to soar above it. They coddled pedantic consciences, and, unwittingly perhaps, frequently pointed a prudish and pharisaical finger; while some unconscious casuistry of mind led them sometimes to disclaim the very ambitions which inevitably lurked under holier names. Their virtues were oppressive—emphasised in italics and paraded in capitals. Shrinking from vulgar contact, and, after Peel’s death, scrupulously debating whether any leader was good enough to join, they yet, in Lady Clanricarde’s epigram, “were constantly putting themselves up to auction and buying themselves in again.” Moreover, their private Church-convictions often dominated their bearing towards the service of the State. Their anxiety, too, to save their own souls honestly deterred them too often from being

generous. Disraeli once wittily remarked of them that their ideal Reform Bill would disfranchise every borough without a statue to Peel.

Contrasted with these, the Whig leaders were all men of the world. The new Ministry, with Sir Charles Wood for Chancellor, was one of only two talents—Russell and Palmerston. The last was for years to represent the sporting instincts of British statesmanship. Conservative at home and revolutionary abroad, he was a Liberal only in his desire to impose the blessings of our Constitution on every portion of the globe. “He looks on it,” said Disraeli, “as a model farm, and tries to force it on every country.” During the next twenty years much of his foreign policy came to be regarded as a “Rake’s Progress.” None the less, he impressed upon Europe that British citizenship could never be violated with impunity.

There was little cohesion in the Cabinet. Palmerston was its *enfant terrible*, and the result was a quantum of meddling and muddling.

The year 1848 seemed to imperil the very institution of monarchy. The democratic idea was rampant, and what was discontent in England was, as Disraeli always insisted, revolution abroad. In France, in Germany, in Spain, crowns wavered, kings trembled and fled. England her-

self was the refuge of an ejected monarch and a fallen statesman. In England, too, the talk of Parliament outran its thought, till the enraged Carlyle believed that representation had proved a farce. Disraeli took a contrary view, believing always in the vitality of institutions however much abused by passing incapacity; and it was this powerful speech that eventually won for him the leadership of the House.

Disraeli's energies were now set on rallying the fragments of the Tories and habituating them to his projects for national union by steadyng the people and attaching them to institutions. He was associated with Stanley (soon to be Lord Derby) and, until his death in 1848, with Lord George Bentinck.<sup>1</sup> But there was little talent left for them to work upon. Could the forty Peelites be gained, and would their fastidiousness ever allow them to be magnanimous? Or would the Whigs win them over one by one? Or would they stand alone and dwindle into a sect?

The country had deliberately adopted Free Trade, but the principle on which Disraeli had opposed it could still be developed by pressing for a diminution of the burdens on land. The influx of the precious metals had caused a rise

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli said of him that his policy was essentially "imperial and not cosmopolitan."

in prices, and for the moment agriculture was not *in extremis*, while wages were satisfactory.

The first muddle of the Ministry was financial. They increased that very income-tax which a few years before they had denounced as “a fungus of monopoly.” There was a Bank crisis. There were four Budgets in one year; and it was on this occasion that Disraeli uttered his famous passage comparing the panic to the ceremony of St. Januarius at Naples, the Chancellor to the Archbishop of Taranto, and the cause of the Ministry to the cause of the miracle—“congealed circulation.”

Then, again, the shipping interest had been estranged by the repeal of the Navigation Laws and by that of the Sugar Duties, and there was Colonial unrest. Peel had declared that in every colony we had “another Ireland.” Gladstone at this very period wrote of our tie being one of duty, not interest. But with the single exception of a stray word in a letter of 1853, when it seemed as if indeed they would prove a “millstone,” Disraeli loved to lay stress on their imperial importance; and, indeed, he supported Lord Palmerston’s dictation to Narvaez in Spain solely because it might indirectly assist our Colonial system.<sup>1</sup> In 1852 he helped to draft

<sup>1</sup> A few years before, he had said, “You turned up your noses at East India cotton as you did at everything Colonial and imperial.”

a constitution for New Zealand. Then there was a prime example of Palmerston's hobby in his interference at Athens over "Don Pacifico." After the debate (1850) both Gladstone and Peel found themselves in the same lobby with Disraeli.

Alarmed by the toppling dynasties of the Continent, England now entered on one of her fits of ultra-nationality. The feeling was anti-French and markedly anti-Pope. With a singular lack of judgment, the Vatican chose this moment for an edict parcelling out Britain into Roman dioceses. It was Cardinal Wiseman's move. "No Popery" was yelled from the housetops, and even bellowed in the theatre. The latitudinarian Premier divined a fresh opportunity, and the "Durham Letter" almost rivalled the "Edinburgh" epistle. Disraeli capped it with another to the Lord-Lieutenant of his county. The Government he considered more blamable than the Pope. They had already recognised the Irish hierarchy. Their policy had been to make no distinction between England and Ireland. They had therefore surrendered the principle before the bull had been framed. Lord John proceeded to bring in a Bill with nominal penalties, which Disraeli termed "a blunder of the sudden." The mountain had brought forth a mouse. The Bill was passed, and died.

The Jew Bill was also mooted. Disraeli always owned that his position with regard to the admission of his race to Parliament was singular. The Jews, he contended, who believed the first but unfortunately not the second covenant, were eminently fitted for citizenship; and, moreover, Christianity itself gave them their right to sit in Parliament. All the first missionaries of Christianity had been Jews,<sup>1</sup> and to the great “House of Israel” also modern civilisation owed an immense debt. He therefore always refused to vote for the measure when it was associated with others that made the privilege seem a mere concession, and prejudiced it. He preferred to await its enactment in the form which it eventually took some ten years later.

But the main point on which he now began to “educate” the country was the franchise. The motions of Hume—the “father of the House,” whom Disraeli greatly respected—and of Locke-King will be touched in the next chapter. The former, made in 1850, actually upset the Government for a space. Disraeli’s purpose was to

<sup>1</sup> “It is entirely on religious grounds and principles that I venture to recommend the subject to your notice. . . . Yes! It is as a Christian that I will not take upon me the awful responsibility of excluding from the Legislature those who are of the religion in the bosom of which my Lord and Saviour was born.”—*Speech*, 1848. And for his consistent position cf. his speech of January 1854.

prevent the extension of suffrage to the sediment of the populace, to confer it in due time on all who could be shown to have earned it by conduct and stability as a privilege, and not to bestow it as “a right,” nor on any one monotonous class, but to await the subsidence of the prevailing ferment and the popularisation of monarchy and its institutions before the practical attempt was made. In this regard, and also as demonstrating his scheme to bide the time until this was achieved before pointing the way to imperial issues, let me here cite a portion of a most remarkable passage penned by him for his organ, *The Press*, in 1853. He had already written of Lord John Russell that he had “not comprehended that for the last twenty years the choice is between the maintenance of those institutions and habits of thought which preserve monarchy, and that gradual change into an absolute democracy, towards which the tendencies of the age seemed to impel Europe. . . .” The cry, too, for the disfranchisement of small constituencies and the introduction of urban voters into the registration of the counties would weaken “every principle by which you can distinguish the Whig” and the Conservative alike “from the democrat.” He proceeded to observe:—

“I see before me a numerous and powerful party animated by chiefs whose opinions in favour of all that can advance

the cause of pure democracy have been openly proclaimed. Amongst them, no doubt, there are some more moderate than others. . . . But all unite in the march of the caravan towards the heart of the desert, and if there be those who then discover that the fountain which allures them on is but the mirage, it will be too late to return, and it will be destruction to pause. . . . If England is to retain that empire which she owes to no natural resources, but to the various influences of a most complicated, but admirable and effective social system, *she must gather into one united phalanx all who hold the doctrine that England to be safe must be great.* . . . *To continue free she must rest upon the intermediate institutions that fence round monarchy as the symbol of executive force from that suffrage of unalloyed democracy which represents the invading agencies of legislative change. Our system . . . must be opposed to all those who by rules of arithmetic would reduce the empire on which the sun never sets to the isle of the Anglo-Saxon.* . . . By what plausible arguments were the dwellers in the Piraeus admitted to vote in the Athenian Assembly? . . . Henceforward from that moment arise the dictator and the demagogue, the flatterer and the tyrant of mobs. Hence, the rapid fluctuations, the greedy enterprises, the dominion of the have-nots, the ruin of the fleet, the loss of the Colonies, the thirty tyrants, the vain restoration of a hollow freedom, the conquest of the Macedonian, the adulation offered to Demetrius as to a god, licence—corruption—servitude—dissolution. . . .”

In 1850 Peel expired, but not before he had magnanimously<sup>1</sup> paid to Disraeli a stiff but

<sup>1</sup> “He had,” wrote Disraeli in his *Life of Bentinck*, “obtained a complete control over his temper, which was by nature somewhat fiery. His disposition was good; there was nothing petty about him; he was very free from

striking compliment. Before he died he observed, too, that Disraeli, "when his hour struck," would be Governor-General of India—"another Ellenborough"; Gladstone would one day be Prime Minister. It was now even thought that the latter might rejoin the Conservatives. But Lord John Russell also tried in vain to gather the Peelites under his wing. The Peelites dreaded some renewal of Protection, and they were vowed to avenge the manes of their chieftain.

In 1850 and 1851 Palmerston broke loose. He offended the Court by off-handed conduct in foreign dispatches. He annoyed both the Court and the Cabinet by his rashness in official acknowledgment of Napoleon III.'s *coup d'état*. In 1852 the Russell Government was completely upset by a division on a Militia Bill, and Palmerston enjoyed his revenge. As often happens, the trifle which ends an Administration was a mere chance for allowing the country to decide on graver issues. At the great Exhibition the dove of peace seemed to hover over the ark of the well-to-do and the subsiding waters of stricken toil with its olive branch of Free Trade. But Europe, regardless of the economist millennium, was marching towards war. Disraeli already divined this. He knew that the Russian Czar rancour. . . . Peace be to his ashes!" Much of this applies equally to Disraeli himself.

retained the impression acquired on his English visit of 1844, when he came to negotiate a secret treaty counter to French interests, that England was anti-French. He had never been undeceived.

Lord Derby was summoned to Windsor. He chose Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader in the House of Commons. He was the first instance of a Chancellor who had not previously "hacked." Yet, in his loyal anxiety for the weakened party, he offered to surrender this proud position if Sir James Graham could be induced to take it. He still hoped to conciliate the ability of the Peelites, and, if possible, to win Gladstone over. He tried at least twice<sup>1</sup> again during the decade to accomplish this object. And at this very turning-point he would willingly have delayed the prize within his grasp. He considered it "a precipitate Ministry." "At last," exclaimed Disraeli to Lord Malmesbury, "we have got a status," and he added that he felt just like a young girl going to her first ball.

<sup>1</sup> In 1852 to Graham or Palmerston; in 1859 to Gladstone.





LORD BEACONSFIELD'S HOUSE IN GROSVENOR GATE

## CHAPTER V

### 1852-1859—PLACE WITHOUT POWER AND POWER WITHOUT PLACE

The situation of parties and of intrigue—Disraeli's vindication of dropped Protection—*The Press* quoted—"Principles" and "Measures"—Disraeli on the franchise—The Derby-Disraeli policy and enactments—Disraeli's two Budgets—Peelite obstruction—Compact between the Opposition and the Irish—The Government out and the Coalition in—Disraeli on it in *The Press*—On the prelude to the Crimean War—Its progress and entanglements—The "Inquiry"—Ministerial resignations—Disraeli's speech (1855)—Intrigues against him—Treaty of Paris—Palmerston's "little difficulties"—Disraeli's attitude—Indian Mutiny—French irritation—The "Orsini" affair makes Palmerston resign.

NO one can study the inner history of 1852 without recognising that the fury of the Peelites and the discomfiture of the Whigs at Disraeli's elevation linked them in an unnatural cabal against the "Who, who?" Ministry, as, echoing Wellington's comment, it was nicknamed. Lord Derby was known to have favoured the

Whig policy of a moderate fixed duty on corn. The united exertions of a virulent faction were now exercised to force the new Government into some unpopular relapse into Protection, which had not been the issue on which Lord Derby had acceded to power. Disraeli cautiously sounded the country on the possibility of some change in the national mind on Free Trade. But when once it was obvious that there was none, he acted with prompt decision. Land must be relieved ; it could not now be "protected." "Reciprocity," a principle, as he said in 1850, "at once national and cosmopolitan," could be encouraged so long as any tariff remained. In 1851 he had expressly urged, "*Have as free an exchange of commodities as you please, but take care first that you place the British producer on terms of equality with those with whom he has to compete. Take care that your legislation does not oppress him with burdens;*" and in his very election address of 1852 he repeated that the Corn Laws were repealed without considering the burdens to which agriculture was subject. His views, therefore, were not concealed. "Free Trade" was no fetich, but a question merely of rent and wages. Since 1849—owing mainly to other circumstances<sup>1</sup>—wages had risen ; but at the same time rents had fallen, and Disraeli avowed

<sup>1</sup> The metallic changes and the employment caused by railway enterprise.

early in 1852 that he would never be for re-altering the Corn Law unless the condition of labour grew permanently worse. Principles could be developed by different measures than a useless return to “obsolete opinions”; and “the Queen’s Government must be carried on.” There was a downpour of indignant aspersion. But Lord John intimated to Gladstone that the Whigs, with their “Appropriation” record, were the last people who ought to abet it. Peel, too, himself, in the ‘thirties, had been prepared to resist the Reform Bill and then pass one of his own. Fox in power had assured his Catholic supporters in Opposition that they must drop their importunities. Gladstone himself had trounced the Whigs in 1841 for stripping the farmers by their fixed duty, had worked the Corn Laws of 1842 so long as it suited him, and had then pitched them to the winds. But the case now was much stronger in the Government’s favour. Their conduct was neither unscrupulous nor inconsistent, because though they might still incline towards a moderate Protection privately, it was publicly impossible. Measures necessarily vary at different conjunctures, for they are only ways of working out principles, and not principles themselves.

But, as Disraeli wrote wittily in *The Press*, “Themis is the goddess of opposition; Nemesis sits in Downing Street.” He smiles at

" . . . Those high and stubborn spirits who, in the severity peculiar to those censors who cannot aspire to be proconsuls, cannot enlarge their comprehension of the requisites of a statesman beyond quotations from Hansard. There are surely some juster thinkers in the House of Commons who must have trembled at the doctrine that men in office are rigidly to carry out *opinions* they professed in Opposition. . . . The first act of Lord Derby's Government on the assembling of Parliament was . . . the recognition of that principle which divides the rulers of a despotism from the Ministers of a constitutional monarchy ; *viz.* *the submission of men made responsible to the Sovereign for the security of the Realm to the power of public opinion when unequivocally expressed by a legitimate appeal to its verdict.* . . . The whole spirit of Lord Derby's Government was to vindicate and vivify the Reform Bill, to preserve the Constitution that Reform Bill had created, but to put into action all its *long neglected* machinery for the redress of grievances or the correction of abuse."

This is true enough, and from a broad aspect Disraeli is thoroughly justified. None the less, and viewing the situation as it presented itself at the time, impartiality constrains one to rank this juncture as the least satisfactory in his career. I cannot help thinking that Disraeli was hampered by Lord Derby's undoubted leaning towards his ancient allies, the Whigs. But it is right also to remember that Disraeli's principle throughout had been to benefit labour and land. At this moment labour was not suffering ; the franchise was not yet an open question. The only remedy left was to exonerate the land.

Whatever course, on the other hand, had been decided (and it would perhaps have proved wiser to have waited awhile before entering the promised land), the Peelites would have denounced it and imputed motives. Their mood was to immolate Disraeli on the altar of Peel's grave, and they charitably styled him "Lord Derby's necessity and his curse."

In the February of 1852 Lord John Russell was to bring in an abortive Reform Bill, and to declare that the question was no longer closed. It was based on a £20 and £5 rating principle, and so far as rating was its qualification, it ran counter to the Radical proposals and tallied with Disraeli's ideas which he enforced in 1867. But the times were not yet ripe.

Disraeli in the two earlier motions before mentioned spoke with sense and foresight on the franchise. These were not times to disturb the imperfect settlement of 1832. The monarchy was for the moment by no means popular. A rebellious spirit walked abroad, and the Manchester Radicals were still baulked of the recognised position which might have lent some sense of responsibility. Hume's measure was for conjoining the ballot and triennial elections with an *unconditional* household franchise. Disraeli pointed out its perils. Locke-King's was one for the reduction of the county franchise. In March

1852 Disraeli distinctly declared that if he "could see any measure brought forward well matured, conceived not in political passion but with a sincere desire of giving *deserving* artisans the exercise of the suffrage in a manner consistent with the maintenance of those institutions which, he believed, were for the interest of those artisans, as they were for the interest of any other class of the country," he would give it a "dispassionate consideration."<sup>1</sup>

At every step the Government were obstructed. They tried to deal with Ireland. They strengthened the home defences, they introduced Chancery reform, they tackled the Colonial difficulties, and sought to conciliate the discord between the farmer and the Colonies; but the Peelite vendetta was implacable. Short time and short shrift were afforded them. Disraeli's two Budgets were assailed with an irrelevance that seems malignant in retrospect. The first was merely provisional. The second was most ingenious, and was commended by fair opponents like Macaulay. To benefit the land, it repealed half the malt-tax; yet Gladstone, who was one day to repeal the whole, treated this as an inquisitor does a heresy. It remedied the unequal incidence of income-tax in a fashion that would now be appreciated. It reduced the tea duty, and thereby stimulated the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mr. Ewald's excellent chronicle, p. 150.

trade with China. Its principle was summed up afterwards by Disraeli in *The Press* as “The conciliation to an inevitable commercial policy of all whom the effects of that policy had for the time most alienated from the Legislature and the Constitution. . . . It connected the supply of subsidies with the redress of grievances.”<sup>1</sup> But its extension of the window-tax formed the main butt of the Junto against him. He had, they hinted, designed the clause to grind down the small householders in democratic towns. In vain Spencer Walpole, in a fine appeal, demanded whether envy had not dictated the onslaught. In vain Disraeli himself laughed bitterly, “I am not a heaven-born Chancellor of the Exchequer”; and, stung by the nettles of “unctuous rectitude,” spoke words which he afterwards recalled<sup>2</sup> with a handsomeness that won him universal appreciation, voiced by Lord John Russell and Sir James Graham himself. The opportunity was too good to miss. A compact had been formed with the forty of the “Irish Brigade” that if they would displace the Ministry its successors would not pro-

<sup>1</sup> In this he confessedly tried to revive the old representative liberty of the Right of Petition.

<sup>2</sup> “Sir James Graham, whom I will not say that I respect, but rather that I regard.” And of Sir Charles Wood, the lecturing ex-Chancellor, that he had learned much, but “had still to learn that petulance is not sarcasm, nor insolence, invective.”

pose an income-tax for Ireland. The Peelites had now requited the combination of 1846. Their object was achieved by the unconstitutional course of forcing a dissolution by limiting the period of supplies, and Derby and Disraeli left office to make way for the “Coalition” Cabinet of “suspended opinions.” But Disraeli could already write that the Tories had begun to recognise “the necessity of employing all the popular elements of the Constitution in support of its monarchical foundation.” Lord Aberdeen’s “Coalition” Cabinet, which broke up in 1855, proved one of the weakest in history. At length the Peelites had found a home. Disraeli, with a humorous sarcasm, compared it with the Ark, “in which creatures of the most opposite species went in two by two.” And yet its components were paragons—on paper. Aberdeen had been Ambassador in Vienna in 1813, a signatory to the Treaty of Paris, and Wellington’s foreign secretary in 1828 ; but he had never acted on his own initiative, and pressed by action, he was always too late. The hard facts that confronted him clashed with sensitive convictions governed by theories. Lord John Russell as Foreign, and Palmerston as Home, Secretaries instanced the most ridiculous exchange of aptitudes on record. But “Pam” was too dashing for his new friends, and was punished accordingly. He was always sparring with Lord John, whom he

finally succeeded in ousting ; and in 1853 he was to prove a “ nine days’ wonder ” when he parted from the Cabinet on Reform, but returned to the fold within that period. Gladstone was a “ heaven-born ” Chancellor, but during this period he enacted the “ penurious prodigal.”

The first note of the new régime was of course peace, retrenchment, and “ moderation.” It seemed an embodiment of the commercial millennium boded by the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park.

When Gladstone opened his first Budget he protested in one of his speeches that he was still a Conservative, he looked back with regret on the “ rupture of ancient ties,” and forward with “ hopes of reunion.” This gravity was too much for Disraeli’s :—

“ . . . Amiable regret, honourable hope ! Reminding us of those inhabitants of the South Sea Islands who never devour their enemies—that would be paying them too great a compliment ; they eat up only their own friends and relations with an appetite proportioned to the love that they bear to them. And then they hasten to deck themselves in the trappings and feathers of those thus tenderly devoured, in memorial of their regret at the ‘ rupture of ancient ties,’ and their ‘ hope of some future reunion.’ Do you feel quite safe with your new ally ? Do you not dread that the same affectionate tooth will some day be fastened upon your own shoulders ? . . . ”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Press*, May 21, 1853.

It was at this period that Disraeli founded the paper from which this extract is taken, and which rivals the political wit of Swift and Bolingbroke in the *Examiner* and the *Craftsman*.

Clouds soon lowered on the Eastern horizon, yet Aberdeen ignored them, and cried “peace” where none was. Russia scented her opportunity for converting the Black Sea into a Muscovite lake and Turkey into a Muscovite province, on the old plea of “intervention” to protect the Christian population. Disraeli recalled Potemkin’s inscription on the gates of Chusan—“This is the road to Constantinople”; and long afterwards he showed that the dream of a Russian Constantinople only dated from the dawn of the century and was one emanating from the brain of “a woman, an alien, and a usurper.” Aberdeen, remembering only the sole occasion when England had fought side by side with the polar bear naturally desirous to be warm—that of the inspiring cause of Greek freedom,—abominated the Turk, and was blind to the necessity of independence, if anarchy or a worse despotism was to be avoided. Russell said “the sick man” must die. Brunnow reported to his master that the “English economists” were convinced that Turkey would never reform her system. The Russians, after shifting their ground

about the “holy places,”<sup>1</sup> despatched Menschikoff to Constantinople. Omar crossed the Danube and occupied the provinces. Louis Napoleon declared that unless England acted with him, he would go to the Black Sea alone. We evacuated it. The “Vienna Note” proved a Ministerial failure. The battle of Oltenitza, an Ottoman victory. We were for non-intervention, yet our fleet eventually sailed from Malta to Besika Bay.

In a speech of 1854 Disraeli delivered a most statesmanlike criticism of the situation. He demonstrated the cause of the war. He exposed the farce at Vienna—a Government with a *parti pris* disappointed at others taking a different view, and in a masterly analysis he pointed the moral, “Credulity or Connivance.” From vacillation divided counsels sank to subservience. We became Napoleon’s cat’s-paw. His game was to bribe Austria out of Italy by a present of Moldavia and Wallachia, and Italy was once more the prize of the rival French and Austrian ambitions.

England declared war in March 1854. The

<sup>1</sup> I need not recall that the opening pretext for the dispute was Russia’s claim, under the old treaty of Kainardji (1774), to protect the Greek Church at Jerusalem. The Latin protectorate, under French hegemony, constantly clashed with the Russian.

heroic Raglan and the dashing St. Arnauld attended the fleets north of the Baltic, but at first effected little. Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman—"epic events"—followed. But all the supplies arrived too late. It was a "too late" Cabinet drifting between haste and delay. England tingled with pride, and anger.

Then followed the "Vienna Conferences" of 1854 and 1855, with Lord John for British Plenipotentiary, which within a year proved worse muddles even than the "Vienna Note." Of our "four points," the chief—Black Sea neutrality—was left unconceded, and for that purpose the war had to be resumed.

Incapacity culminated in 1855. The condition of the troops entrenched before Sebastopol was diseased and deplorable. A motion for inquiry was raised. Lord John returned bootless from Vienna, where he had advanced only, under Austrian influence, to retreat to London, and there he repeated the operation by scuttling out of the Cabinet rather than face the vote for Inquiry. The chivalrous Aberdeen wrung his hands in despair. His policy of a Janus-Temple with *both* doors open had led to a needless war abominably managed, with its real issues blinked; to Ministerial desertions crowned by the Foreign Secretary's elopement. His Administration would remain famous for seventy-four defeats in debate

and four critical withdrawals from the Ministry. "Pam" was now quits with "Johnnie." The Coalition broke up.

The Queen then requested Lord Derby to form an Administration. He dreaded Palmerston, however, and declined. Disraeli was very wroth, and is said to have spoken out his mind roundly to his chief. He again offered to yield the leadership to Graham or Gladstone if that would concentrate and conciliate the party. By general consent (including Gladstone's recorded opinion), Lord Derby's hesitating timidity lost a golden hour for the Conservatives. Events had stamped the contrast between them and their successors on the imagination of the country; and a patriotic moment would have welcomed their patriotism. Palmerston too, if pressed resolutely, might have joined, despite his personal ambition.

Palmerston became Premier. But political troubles still ruled. The Peelites wrestled with tortuous consciences as to whether they could serve under such a worldling as Palmerston, swallowed their scruples, and then, in February 1855, slipped out again into the cold from what Disraeli called the "reburnished Cabinet."

All this time Disraeli returned again and again to the charge, sometimes to his party's

dismay,<sup>1</sup> criticising, elucidating, educating on foreign affairs, on Gladstone's finance which threw the whole war burden upon revenue and had introduced succession duty, on University education, on the Enlistment of Foreigners Act, which he resented as weakening our European influence by mercenaries. His finest oration was that on Roebuck's motion for the Inquiry, January 29, 1855, which he compared with the Walcheren Inquiry nearly half a century before. He maintained with brilliance that neither of these "inquiries" were votes of censure weakening the hands of a Government at war, nor was this motion one of want of confidence, because the former things had passed away in forty-eight hours, nor did one know what Administration the morrow might bring forth. It was not "timid" nor unpatriotic to strengthen the struggle and the English position in Europe by a course strictly precedented which would allay the just anxieties of the nation. "Substitute Sebastopol for Antwerp"—and the Crimea repeated Walcheren.

<sup>1</sup> In this course he avowedly modelled his course on Canning's. Speaking in March 1854, he adverted to Canning's answer to Sheridan, who had taunted him with joining critical mistrust to patriotic concurrence:—" . . . It would be much more uncandid and unfair to conceal our general sentiments at the moment of expressing our approbation."

With Palmerston came a firm front. He had England's honour at heart, but as to party he had never been particular. He had served under ten chiefs, from Portland to Aberdeen, and he had, so to speak, never cared who was the tailor so long as he wore (or turned) the coat. The question now was, peace or war. Even Lord John, who of course had edged in again, favoured a peace if we could get our terms. He resigned. But Palmerston averred England unanimous for the resumption of war, while he scorned to count the Birmingham "Peace-at-any-price'rs," with whom he now mixed up Russell and Gladstone. In vain he sought to put off Disraeli's importunities for an inquiry. Disraeli instanced a batch of sparkling precedents worthy of Macaulay. The resignations had hinged on the inquiry, yet the Premier had patted their honesty on the back—and remained. When the results of the Committee of Inquiry reported the facts and their causes, the country was rabid, and resolved to follow Palmerston whithersoever he might lead it.

Just before the Whitsun recess of 1855 Disraeli made a magnificent speech on the whole situation, laying down the true principles of Britain's interest abroad with dignity and breadth of view. He unravelled the whole skein of blunders which had preluded and attended the war. Lord John had gone to Vienna for the

assertion of Turkey's right to enter the European Confederation, to limit Russia on the Black Sea, and to abolish her preponderance there. Now that the protocols were on the table, were both doors still to be left open? Were negotiations and war being carried on at once? "You cannot join an aggressive war and a protective policy," otherwise the country would pronounce the game scarce worth the candle. And in concluding the debate, he made two most important distinctions. The one, between a Government majority for home measures which can be reversed, and for a foreign policy which is irretrievable; the other, between his object and the Government's. Theirs was at last the checkmate of Russia on the Black Sea alone. But Asia and the Danube were more urgent perils; for to the Euxine Russia could not easily transport cavalry or stores to Sebastopol. He recommended—(1) The neutrality of the provinces, whereby, though Turkey's Danubian frontier might be reduced, Russia would have to cross a river and encounter the dangers of the Dobrudscha and their fortresses on the right, Silistria on the left, before she could attack. (2) An Asiatic boundary through fortresses to be erected at Kars and Erzeroum under periodical British inspection. (3) The security of Constantinople. The Eastern fortresses on the coast of the Black Sea should, when peace was

concluded, be destroyed. In a previous speech occurs his excellent dictum that “apologies only account for that which they cannot alter.”

All along Disraeli’s aim had been to make a wavering and bewildered Government take a decided course. First, there had been counsels divided between peace and war. Then there had arisen a bellicose Government clutching at straws of peace instead of securing firm conditions. The Minister who hurried out of the first Government from dread of public censure had been despatched by the second to insist on a specific point at the Vienna Conference. He secretly surrendered it to a private understanding with Austria, while he had always favoured that “protectorate” which was Russia’s real aim in war. Now there was a Premier who repudiated “inquiries” into the conduct of the war on the ground of “delicate negotiations” for peace, and yet equally resented any suggested doubts as to the probability of that war’s firm prosecution—who combined the sensitiveness of the invalid with the bravado of a bully.

In the spring of 1856 intrigues were again afoot to effect a conjunction of Derbyites and Peelites and dislodge Disraeli. To his lasting honour, Gladstone refused “to bargain Disraeli out of the saddle.” Disraeli himself in the following year offered, if need be, to surrender his

leadership. His long task of heartening and organising a weak Opposition on an uphill road, where victory was invisible and the embitterments loomed hourly larger, was immense, and it was performed with consummate temper, patience, courage, spirit, and skill. He has himself described the difficulties in the passage which sympathises with Lord John Russell's embarrassments between 1836 and 1846.<sup>1</sup> In his own case they were increased not only by the murmurs and manœuvres of some of his own following, but also by his long-sighted purpose to replace their aimless and worn-out ideas by a plan and a creed. In the teeth of all obstacles, this man of ideas and imagination had already gained not so much a foremost, as a paramount, hold over the prosaic material of his generalship.

The Treaty of Paris, admirably summarised by Disraeli in his speech some twelve years later on the Black Sea Conference, brought a needless war to an honourable end; but the chapter of distant crisis was by no means ended. At home, Church matters still engrossed attention, and Disraeli defended the Church Rates with originality and interest.

Palmerston's earlier scrapes only lent him a fresh zest now that he was at last free master of affairs. The once truant was now tutor. His

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, pp. 12, 13.

era of little difficulties began—in Persia, in Prussia, in Central Italy, Switzerland, and China. In 1856 we annexed Oudh, and, as Disraeli well showed, this was part of the policy that was the true cause of the mutiny which broke out in the following year. Disraeli's speeches of 1857 on this terrible emergency are among the most prophetic and sympathetic that he ever delivered. With the charm of romance and the style of genius, he recounted the thrilling chronicle of Britain's Indian ascendancy. Our dangers now arose from Ministers who ignored the nature and needlessly offended the susceptibilities of the native—religious, social, political. But, above all things, in suppressing a rebellion which these deficiencies had engendered, we must not repeat them. Mercy should be tempered with justice, and the Hindoo should be led to realise the great Queen as a monarch who symbolised both strength and loving-kindness. Disraeli also sketched out a definite plan for the termination of the trouble.

As regards Lord Palmerston's applauded insolence to China, Disraeli deprecated it also. Diplomacy consisted, he urged, in saying a rough thing gently, and not in the converse conduct. The Chinese were eminently a people of etiquette. None the less, his motion condemning Palmerston's policy in China seems tactically to

have been a mistake. About this time Gladstone, however, joined Disraeli in voting against the gay Premier's extravagance in his escapades. "There is no country," urged Disraeli, "that can go on raising seventy millions in times of peace with impunity."

But the Achilles-heel of Palmerston's "spirited" foreign policy was its tendency to irritate the French. Disraeli always considered a cordial understanding between both sides of the Channel as indispensable; and a delicate consideration for France actuated him from first to last. In 1858 (and in 1861) we were within an ace of war with our neighbours. The case of "Orsini" the bomb-maker, Napoleon's remonstrance, and Palmerston's consequent "Conspiracy" Bill, brought matters to a head. Gladstone supported Disraeli in denouncing the abuse by foreign assassins of the British liberty of asylum. "In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred," said Disraeli, "a quarrel between two States is caused by some blunder of the Ministry." On the division, Lord Palmerston found himself at last in a small minority, and resigned. Lord Derby and Disraeli re-entered Downing Street; but the latter plainly perceived that their tenancy was no better than annual, and that their year's notice to quit was in the air almost directly they came in.

## CHAPTER VI

1858-1867—WAITING

Disraeli's attempt to gain Gladstone—Once more Chancellor of Exchequer and leader of House—Italian disturbance—India Bill “number three”—Campbell's Oudh proclamation—The “Cabal”—Disraeli on Cardwell's motion—Franchise Bill (1859)—Parliament dissolved—Conservatives return to power—The “Cabal” upset them on Lord Hartington's motion—The delayed “Malmesbury Dispatches”—Derby resigns—Disraeli on progress of Conservatism—Palmerston returns to power—A Cabinet with “two faces”—Gladstone's Budget and inconsistencies—Disraeli on the Italian Question—The American War—Our Colonies—Crisis of 1865—Disraeli on Poland—The Danish Question—The Church—Deaths and changes—Russell's premiership—Gladstone's Reform Bill—Lord Derby returns to power.

THE episode which now opens may be summed up by my heading, because it covers the period when gradually the country at large grew to understand Disraeli and to accept him as a habit of their daily experience.

The times were critical: trouble was brewing in Italy, where Napoleon “meant business.” Many

in England, ardent for Italian unity, were for English interference, which must have resulted in friction with France.

Before resuming office, Disraeli had once more essayed to gain Gladstone, and renewed his offers to lay down, and efface himself. Mr. Morley has disclosed the generous and magnanimous letter in which several earlier attempts culminated, but which was written in vain.<sup>1</sup> Lord Derby also did his utmost. "I may be removed from the scene," Disraeli said in that letter, "or I may wish to be removed from the scene."

The Ministry was not weak. It included, besides Disraeli at the Exchequer once more, the future Lord Salisbury as Lord President, Chelmsford as Chancellor, Henley at the Board of Trade, Pakington at the Admiralty, Bulwer Lytton for the Colonies, the old names of Manners and Malmesbury, and the new one of Colonel Peel, brother of Sir Robert, whom, to the disgust of the "Peelite," Disraeli had conciliated. But it had now to face an even more formidable and venomous "Cabal"<sup>2</sup> than in 1852; for Palmerston's

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Morley's *Life*, i. p. 587.

<sup>2</sup> "What I call a Cabal," said Disraeli, "is . . . a body of men banded together not to carry out a policy . . . but uniting all their resources, abilities, and valid influence to upset the Queen's Government. . . . The first article of their creed is place."

party was now allied both to the Peelites and Cobdenites in an unbending phalanx against it.

This soon became apparent in their attitude towards Indian affairs. Disraeli's hand in calming France through Lord Malmesbury, and in the Indian Bill "number 3,"<sup>1</sup> whose "fancy franchises" and elective element were expunged when Lord John Russell's "Resolutions" were adopted, had been very manifest. Next followed Lucknow and Sir Colin Campbell's unfortunately severe proclamation. Lord Ellenborough, as new President of the Board of Control, denounced it at home in harmony with Outram's strictures on the spot. The whole strength of the "Cabal" was pressed to eject the Government on a pronouncement that impartial review must now indorse. Even Lord Shaftesbury was enlisted in the manipulated motion which Mr. Cardwell forwarded in the other House only to withdraw it.

" . . . Gamaliel himself, with the broad phylacteries of faction on his forehead, called God to witness, in pious terms of majestic adoration, that he was not like other men and was never influenced by party motives. . . . There is

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<sup>1</sup> This of course related to the end of the great corporation which Disraeli said "rivalled and resembled Venice." One of his proposed qualifications for a part of the elective council being qualified by residence at the native Courts would have acted admirably.

nothing like that last Friday evening. We came down to the House expecting to dine at four o'clock in the morning. . . . Suddenly there arose a wail of distress, but not from us. . . . It was like a convulsion of nature rather than any ordinary transaction of human life. I can only liken it to one of those earthquakes which take place in Calabria or Peru. There was a rumbling murmur, a groan, a shriek, a sound of distant thunder. . . . There was a rent, a fissure in the ground, and then a village disappeared; then a tall tower toppled down; and the whole of the Opposition benches became one great dissolving view of anarchy. Are these the people whom you want to govern the country, . . . between whom there is discord on every point, and who are not even united by the common bond of wishing to seize upon the spoils of office?"

Disraeli's May Budget was popular, and his dissertation on the income-tax, which he refused to increase—depending rather on the suspension of the war sinking fund, the equalisation of the spirit duty, and the new tax on cheque-stamps—most convincing.

The Parliament dealt with the Oaths Bill, the purification of the Thames (one of Disraeli's "Health" hobbies so early as 1852), and the new constitution for British Columbia. It was prorogued from August 1858 till February 1859.

Central Italy was now in ferment, and the Government sought to heal the mutual mistrust of France and Austria. If the settlement of 1815 was to be upset, England, however, was prepared to co-operate.

But, while England was far from restful, and by no means yet wedded again to her old institutions, Lord Derby, more Rupert than Fabius, was bent on choosing this unripe juncture for settling the franchise. Disraeli would have preferred to wait, and, if the problem must now prematurely be tackled—it is believed—to have established it on the foundation of that “rating” value which could alone ensure some pledge for steadiness to a class newly manumitted. Above all, he was resolved that no class preponderance—the Manchester ideal—should be conceded, and that variety and not monotony of representation should be secured by opening the suffrage to influence more than to interest. He feared the alliance between Democracy and Mammon. No “new Piræus” should destroy “our Athens.” It was, however, decided that the “rating” basis would at present be too unpopular, and Disraeli, with bitter foreboding, felt that the Bill was doomed. But he did not shirk the task, and to the enormous labour expended over it he owed some of that mastery over its details which enabled him to sight every point of the compass in 1867. Throughout his desire remained to spread the vote instead of levelling it.

Disraeli rose to introduce the Bill in March 1859. He pointed out that the labours of 1832 had been “experimental”; that Peel had made

a compact with the country, however, not to re-open it, but that Lord John Russell had twice since then reopened the question for both parties, and that now “there is a general wish among all men of light and leading”<sup>1</sup> for a solution. During the interval the people had been educated. Science had been brought to bear on social life “in a manner no philosopher in his dreams could ever have anticipated.” But there were two classes of reformers. The one, those who made “population” the basis, and who therefore logically disbelieved in representation, for where all were represented, it became unnecessary.<sup>2</sup> The other, those “who would adapt the settlement of 1832 to the England of 1859.” In doing so the main object must be to maintain that variety of representation which the borough system had unintentionally secured. “It is not in the power of one or two classes to give that variety of character and acquirement by which the administration of a country can be carried on.” Otherwise the House would “lose its hold over the Executive.” We should fall back into

<sup>1</sup> This phrase from Burke he repeated in 1880. “Peace with honour,” too, he had already used in the Crimean debates.

<sup>2</sup> Disraeli twenty years before had denied that by our constitution “taxation and representation” went hand in hand. There was—as in the Upper House—representation without election.

a “bureaucratic system”—the very position “from which in 1640 we had to extricate ourselves.” In course of time administration might thus be carried on “by a Court Minister, perhaps by a Court minion,” and an assembly would be created, chosen by great constituencies, yet chosen from limited classes, or perhaps from a single class of the community. “We cannot acknowledge that population or property,” or even both conjoined, “should be the sole system on which the legislative system should be constructed.”

He proposed, therefore, to create a new franchise in the boroughs so as to give due effect to small ownings of personal property. Ten pounds a year in trust securities, sixty pounds capital in the savings banks,<sup>1</sup> recipients of naval, military, or civil pensions of twenty pounds or upwards, would be entitled to the vote in their borough of residence. Franchises would also be conferred on university graduates, ministers of religion, members of the legal and medical professions, and on certain schoolmasters. And dwellers in a portion of a house rented at twenty pounds were also to participate. Here Disraeli sowed the seeds both of a loss and a gain; and in 1867 he said with truth that of the

<sup>1</sup> This was adopted by Gladstone in 1866 and denounced by him in 1867.

“lodger” vote he was “the father.” He refused to lower the franchise of towns on a valuation principle. Whatever its limits, whether ten pounds or five pounds, “you would have a monotonous constituency.” As regarded the county franchise, he also anticipated his measure of eight years afterwards by trying to assimilate its working to that of the boroughs. He propounded a ten pounds county franchise and that the enjoyment of a town and county franchise should be exercised concurrently, subject to provisions against abuse of the dual vote, so as to enable each man to “vote for the place where he resides and with which he is substantially connected.” By these means the heart-burnings of the “Chandos Clause” of 1832, providing that an occupation of real estate rented at fifty pounds should confer the county franchise, would be allayed ; while the franchises for thrift, education, and frugality would widen the avenues to the mechanic alike and the professional man.

This measure has well been described by Mr. Ewald as extending the area without changing the balance of power, whose distribution it altered but did not revolutionise. Throughout, it aimed at what he repeated in 1866 and 1867, the representation rather of *opinions* than of *numbers*, and he afterwards styled it, in what Gladstone terms a “quackish” phrase, as “lateral” not “vertical”

extension. The speech introducing it took three hours and a half in delivery. But Whigs, Radicals, and Peelites were banded in profiting by the opportunity. In a House of 621—from which Gladstone, however, despatched by Disraeli's advice to the Ionian Islands, was absent—the second reading of the Bill was secured by a majority of only 39.

War had now broken out between France and Austria. England had engaged “to mediate between two great monarchs,” and, if possible, preserve the blessings of peace. Lord Derby appealed to the country, and Parliament was dissolved. The Conservatives gained twenty-nine seats, but the inexorable “Cabal” was determined. Their compunctions were private, not public. The diplomatic negotiations between France and Austria had failed, but the heroes of the Crimean fiascos inveighed against this misfortune. It was urged by partisans of short memory that the breakdown of the Reform Bill would preclude the Government from dealing with the subject again. A compact was formed between Palmerstonians, Peelites, and Radicals, ecclesiastic or commercial, to dethrone Disraeli, and, unless Palmerston could be grafted on Derby, to hound him out also.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is apparent from Morley's *Gladstone*, i. 623-25. Only a year later Henley and Walpole said they would have followed Gladstone if he had not joined Palmerston.

Adverting four years later to this combination, Disraeli said—

“ . . . We fell before the most peculiar coalition that ever existed. . . . The Liberal party defeated us in 1852 because they coalesced with the pupils of Peel, . . . in 1859 because they coalesced with the pupils of Bright. . . . The powers of coalition are exhausted. In the purgatory in which the Liberal party found themselves, they first applied to Celestial archangels, and then they descended to the lowest abyss of Hades. But a lower abyss there is not. . . . ”

On the reassembling of Parliament the present Duke of Devonshire moved an amendment to the Address tantamount to a motion of want of confidence. After a three days' debate, the division on June 10, 1859, showed a majority of only 13 in the Ministry's favour. They therefore resigned.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Granville failed in forming a Government, and the inevitable Lord Palmerston—under whom

<sup>1</sup> The point of the belated “Malmesbury Dispatches” I have no space to discuss. Had the Government's Austro-French and Italian diplomacy been divulged and laid on the table of the House, the Ministry, it was said by competent observers, would have stood. Disraeli withheld the Blue Book, Mr. Paul holds in his recent and admirable *History*, because Disraeli had read it. I venture to dissent. As compared with the previous Government's management in the Cagliari affair, these negotiations were models. But in any case Disraeli knew well that to ride for a fall was imperative in face of the “Cabal.” The matter still remains a vexed issue.

both Gladstone and Sidney Herbert had long protested they could never serve—returned to power with those two prominent spirits as Chancellor of Exchequer and Secretary for War respectively. Russell, who had insisted on the leadership, was once more at the Foreign Office, and while Palmerston lived was doomed to be his subordinate, and prevented from reopening Reform. Cobden—and this is significant—was offered the portfolio of the Board of Trade, but he refused it in favour of Milner Gibson, who himself had set out a Conservative.

The Conservative party had been turned out under the pretext that under their guidance a war with France was imminent, and Palmerston acceded on the understanding that he would bring in some measure of democratic reform. He of course did nothing of the kind, and openly declared soon afterwards that his foreign policy would be modelled on his predecessor's.

"The Conservative party," said their proud "educator," defeated but not disheartened, in the following month, "is now a great Confederation, prepared to assist progress and resist revolution. We have arrived at this commanding position at the very moment when it has devolved upon us to abandon power. . . . In attempting however humbly to regulate its fortunes, I have

always striven to distinguish that which is eternal from that which was but accidental in its opinions.<sup>1</sup> . . . I believe it to be a party peculiarly and essentially ‘national’—a party which adhered to the institutions of the country as embodying the national necessities, and forming the best security for the liberty, the power, and the prosperity of England.”

Palmerston’s natural arena was Continental embroilment. During the next six years the ambitions of France and Germany, the throes of America, of Italy, of Poland, with all their side-influences, overmastered all home issues except the great destinies of the Church. On all these typical commotions Disraeli’s insight was eloquent. I have here no space to dwell on them, and can only glance at some leading features.

But before doing so one *trait* of the Administration itself must briefly be noticed. It had two faces. As Disraeli pointed out in 1862, there was “a patriotic Prime Minister appealing to the spirit of the country,” and yet at the same time an economical Chancellor of Exchequer “proposing votes with innuendo and recommending ex-

<sup>1</sup> This is the very point singled out by him in discerning the genius of Bolingbroke in the “Letter to Lyndhurst” of 1835. Disraeli repeated this train of thought several times in the years 1863-67.

penditure in a whispered invective.” Gladstone’s retrenchment Budgets exhibited some curious anomalies. His repeal of the Paper Duty was “tacked on” to Supply, so as to cripple the action of the House of Lords—a trick of the reign of Queen Anne. One of Palmerston’s main objects was to make England’s defences inexpugnable. Yet Gladstone, plied as regards other policies by ecclesiastics, was worked upon here by Manchester and Birmingham against swollen armaments, though he refused a preference of remission to the war-burdens, which Disraeli protested was due to the taxpayer. Cobden himself effected in 1860 the French Treaty which Disraeli welcomed. At the same time he pointed out with regard to the Italian Treaty of 1863 that since the tariff had been practically abolished, reciprocity was dead. “The age of Commercial Treaties was past, because England had now no means and no materials for negotiation.” Only political influence could now assist such situations. Gladstone grew imperious and inconsistent. In 1859 he complained that Disraeli tried to “trip him up over his Budget,” and records “it was not so that I used him.” Did he remember his invectives against the “deficit” of 1852, though he himself was to brave one out in 1862? And could he forget that he had only aided Disraeli when he wanted to slap Palmerston, under whom he was

now serving, as he was afterwards to serve under Russell, whom he had also denounced. Palmerston in 1861 had to rebuke Gladstone's Manchester speech, inviting agitation to force the Government into parsimony. Disraeli's Opposition in 1860-66 was essentially non-factional. While, moreover, Gladstone was nobly seeking to emancipate commerce, he was sometimes blind to the fact that this did not involve the employment of labour. His mistrust of vested interests led him in 1863 to bring forward an odious tax on charities. The hands were the hands of a Conservative Whig, but the voice was the voice of a Manchester Radical. Already he was nearing his tribuneship and beginning to pit an overwhelming eloquence, translating an audience's emotions, against Disraeli's searching rhetoric seeking to restrain them. More than once Disraeli inveighed against Budgets which assumed that exemption from direct taxation was unjust, which offended the cherished feelings of tradition, and which, by denouncing endowments, were already "almost an appeal for confiscation."

With regard to Italian Unity, however much as Disraeli by association and inheritance sympathised with it, he recognised that England's interference (as even the Duke of Newcastle perceived) would mean European bloodshed, and

foreign affairs ever meant for him Britain's interests abroad. It is the will of France as head of the Latins, he announced, that can alone restore Rome to the Italians. It is the sword of France—if any sword can do it—that alone can free Venetia from the Austrians. He commended the abused treaty of Villa Franca, which secured a southern barrier against Germany without endangering the independence either of the Pope or of Switzerland.

"If the unity of Italy is to be effected by such influences and by such means, are we to suppose that a sovereign who is described as profound and crafty, and a people whom we know to be ambitious and quick-witted, will be prepared to make . . . such a surpassing sacrifice and such an enormous effort without obtaining some result? . . . If the unity of Italy was to be effected, it could only be effected by a power which occupied Italy in great force: that unity could not be established under such auspices without results dangerous to the repose of Europe. . . ."

Here Disraeli was right as against the Government, but wrong as against the future. Two years more were to prove that two heroic individualities, Sardinian and Genoese, were to free Italy and repiece her fragments. All the same, had it not been for Napoleon's traditional designs against Austria that emancipation might have been long delayed. And Disraeli's divining rod for once missed its direction because of the picture imprinted on his fantasy by the study of

acknowledge the South, while Gladstone surveyed the war from the standpoint of Lancashire, Disraeli alone restrained them, and for this Bright praised him. But while Bright was for the severance of any but commercial ties with Canada, Disraeli pressed home the lessons of true, of unaggressive Imperialism.

"We are to recollect," he urged again in 1866, with a view to Colonial inclusion in Parliament, "that England is the metropolis of a Colonial Empire; that she is at the head of a vast number of Colonies the majority of which are yearly increasing in wealth; and that every year these Colonies send back to these shores their capital and their intelligence in the persons of distinguished men, who are naturally anxious that these interests should be represented in the House of Commons."

In 1863 he called our Colonial Empire "the national estate . . . as it were a freehold . . . which gives to the energies and abilities of Englishmen an inexhaustible theatre." But none the less in 1864 he had warned the Colonies that, since they were set against home interference, they must "pay their way." This was the period when the Ionian Islands too were handed over to Greece, and Disraeli thought that such an encouragement to the restless ambitions of a small power might endanger the independence of Turkey, and thereby the peace of Europe.

"Professors of rhetoric," he urged, "find a system for every contingency and a principle for every chance, but you

are not going, I hope, to leave the destinies of the British Empire to prigs and pedants."

Such are a few of his piercing pronouncements from the opening of hostilities in 1861 to the murder of President Lincoln in 1865, when Disraeli in a most moving speech declared that political assassinations never changed the fate of nations.

The sarcasm about "prigs and pedants" was no mere flourish. The year 1865 was critical for England. With the commercial and capitalist school of Bright's democracy was now associated the clever and colonial Lowe, who though fearing a debasement of franchise, joined with the rest in belittling the past and present mission of Great Britain, lost no occasion of lamenting the instincts of a national monarchy, and perpetually "hailed with horrid melody the moon." Perish India, perish the Colonies, perish our armaments of defence—the surest security for peace—were cries active in the mouths of a powerful and pushing confederation who wanted to reduce this country to the level of "a third-rate republic." When a strong governor like Eyre put down Colonial rebellion in the spirit of Clive, they gibbeted him as an imperial felon. Every movement, every institution untranslatable into pounds, shillings, and pence, were held up as immoral to an advancing community discontented

at an hour of political unrest and financial distress. The Tory party, Disraeli protested so early as 1863, the party which in 1859 was despaired of as rallying centre, the party which he had taught to steer between oligarchs and democrats, the party which was at length coming to oppose “liberal opinions” by “popular principles” and “popular rights,” must be prepared to preserve the national fabric built up out of a limited though real monarchy, a national church, the ordered estates of the realm, the ancient tenure of land, corporations and endowments, a Colonial Empire: for by their union and communion public liberties, education secular and spiritual, the rights of labour and claims of industry, security for person and property, the reality and continuity of government, are kept and assured: and he repeated with new variations the ideas he had announced at Aylesbury in 1847.

“A professor of liberal opinions, on the other hand, is an individual who is of opinion that he ought to be liberated from the control of these institutions. If he has a republican bias, he is for reducing the sovereign to the position of a chief magistrate. If he be a dissenter, quite forgetful of the indirect advantage of an establishment and of a national church even to himself, . . . he is desirous of reducing it to the position of a rival sect. If the House of Commons is an obstacle to the success of his political schemes he is for reforming the House of Commons. If the House of Lords, . . . he will abrogate the House of Lords. To him the

Colonial Empire is only an annual burden. To him corporation is only an equivalent term for monopoly, and endowment for privilege. . . .”

During these years, too, Disraeli adverted with pride to the success of no less than twenty-eight measures for the relief and improvement of labour—measures to be more than doubled during his own final term of power, yet impeded and opposed by the Manchester upholders of “utility.” For such measures he was always enthusiastic. About this period, too, he warmly advocated the right of Catholic prisoners to receive the consolations of their Church. He was often reproached with indifference to insurgent nationalities, but where interference or remonstrance did not involve worse national and European evils this was not the case, as is witnessed at this very time by his powerful and sympathetic plea for Poland.<sup>1</sup> And when Napoleon in 1863, like the Czar in 1817 and 1901, proposed a congress of sovereigns for the pacification of Europe, Disraeli lamented the Government’s blunt refusal to join.

In 1864 Bismarck’s far-reaching schemes were preluded by Prussian designs on the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. These had fallen under

<sup>1</sup> He spoke heartily for the Polish movement, because it was a local as well as a national movement against oppression, and no stalking-horse of agitators or sovereigns. Cf. Ewald’s *Lord Beaconsfield*, p. 514.

the sphere of Danish protection and institutions by the withdrawal of the German troops in 1850–52. But since then the failure of direct succession to the united though conflicting duchies had caused a fresh complication. By the Treaty of London (1852) the present King of Denmark had been guaranteed as heir; but the Duke of Lauenburg, despite a promise of renunciation, now laid claim with the armed support of Germany. Both Austria and Russia were interested, and both soon found England neither a prop nor an obstacle. The Government behaved with deplorable in-consequence. They first pledged themselves to uphold Denmark's "integrity," and encouraged her to resist Russia; but then abandoned her to her fate. They threatened Russia, but their threats were despised. Napoleon refused his assistance, and this was made their excuse. They humiliated England. They interfered in a war of succession regulated by violated treaties, and then receded from the very treaties that they brandished in the face of Europe. They were firm and flabby by turns. In the case of Poland they had thrown over the French Emperor; in this case he had flouted us, and another ally was to be sacrificed.

Disraeli in several speeches impugned and analysed this conduct. In the address to the Crown of 1864 he was blamed for alluding to the

“just influence of England being lowered.” The ministerial champions declared the course as unprecedented in the “great days of the Norths and the Foxes.” Disraeli soon showed them that Fox himself had used language far more opprobrious to the Ministry and violent in its terms in 1796. In his main speech of July 1864 he discussed the whole subject with historical dignity and width of outlook, and on statesmanlike principles of diplomacy which he was long afterwards to apply :—

“ . . . The Government have failed in their avowed policy of upholding the independence and integrity of Denmark. The first result may be thrown aside. I come therefore to the second. By the just influence of England in the Councils of Europe, I mean an influence contradistinguished from that which is obtained by intrigue and secret understanding; I mean one that results from the conviction of foreign Powers that our resources are great and that our policy is moderate and steadfast. Since the settlement that followed the great Revolutionary War<sup>1</sup> England, who obtained at that time—as she deserved . . . all the fair objects of her ambition, has on the whole followed a Conservative foreign policy. By this I do not mean a foreign policy that would disapprove—still less oppose—the natural development of nations, I mean one interested in the tranquillity and prosperity of the world, the normal condition of which is peace, and which does not ally itself with the revolutionary party of Europe. *Other countries have their political systems and public objects as England had, though they*

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<sup>1</sup> The Vienna Congress, 1815.

*may not have attained them. She is not to look upon them with unreasonable jealousy.* The position of England in the Councils of Europe is essentially that of a *moderating and mediatorial Power*. . . . Within twelve months we have been twice repulsed at St. Petersburg. Twice have we supplicated in vain at Paris. We have menaced Austria, and Austria has allowed our menaces to pass by like the idle wind. We have threatened Prussia, and Prussia has defied us. Our objurgations have rattled over the head of the German Diet, and it has treated them with contempt. . . . If England is resolved upon a particular policy, war is not probable. If there is, under these circumstances, a cordial alliance between England and France, war is most difficult; but if there is a thorough understanding between England, France, and Russia, war is impossible. . . .”

On the last great issue of this era's crowded events I can only instance a few leading utterances. The Church undoubtedly was “in danger.” It was beset by internal dissension, by social attacks, by the “higher” criticism of the School of Tübingen, by a league between Romanisers and Radicals, by the growing desire to despoil and disattach her from the State. On the Church Rates Bill of 1861—when Bright had designated the Church as an “archæological curiosity”—Disraeli pointed out that a Dissenter was no stranger or “wild animal,” as was insinuated. He was an Englishman, “animated by all the feelings and principles of Englishmen. Where he is in a majority he can win his way; where in a minority he yields to the majority, as all other Englishmen

do on the principle which underlies our social system. The Church itself is a principal barrier against that centralising supremacy which has been in all other countries so fatal to liberty. Was it wise to disregard an ancestral institution in days when the tendency was to weaken government?" In 1863, on Mr. Buxton's Articles-Relaxation motion (a third onslaught in one year), he vindicated the Church's national position and exploded the vapourings about "sacerdotal despotism." His idea, he said, of sacerdotal despotism was when a minister "appointed to expound doctrine" should "invent" it,—"no creed, no Church." The Church was founded on a Catholic belief, but that does not compel a Catholic communion. On the Oaths Bill of 1866 he declared his opinion to be that the Established Church did not depend on oaths. "In all its branches it is too deeply rooted in the affections of the people and traditions of the country." He had never raised the "in danger" cry. If a severance took place between Church and State, he had always felt that it would be the State that would be "in danger." It would "gradually but certainly reduce government to be a mere affair of police."<sup>1</sup> And in many outside speeches at county or diocesan assemblies he asserted that the as-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the passages to the same effect more than twenty years earlier in *Coningsby* and *Sybil*.

sailants of the Church, whether of her doctrines or of her discipline, would find that their criticisms, which were nothing new, would recede, and their schisms would fail, in the light of eternal truths and in the national necessity for preserving them.

The struggle forecasted by Disraeli in 1833 and in 1853 between democracy detached and democracy national was fast defining itself. The deaths of the Prince Consort and of Cobden (to both of whom he paid his public meed of worthy homage<sup>1</sup>) had also changed the surface of affairs. Sidney Herbert had also passed away. Hence-forward Disraeli was free from the machination, though not always from disaffection. The last six years had been the most disheartening of his life. Incommunicable often, and never courting the crowd, he had often sat alone in his seat misunderstood, mistrusted, and aloof. Yet all the time his party was owing more to his genius than it has ever fathomed. In 1865 the Government dissolved. During the dissolution the great name of Palmerston (gracefully honoured by both Disraeli and Gladstone) was added to the death-roll. In 1866 Russell became Premier for the first time after nearly twenty years. Gladstone led the Lower House. In 1865 Mr. Baines reverted to the reform of the franchise by a Bill stigmatised by Lowe as one of “swamping democracy.” No

<sup>1</sup> The latter speech affected Bright to tears.

sooner was Gladstone installed than he brought forward his own Reform Bill, which was essentially one of compromise. It even adopted Disraeli's former savings-bank qualification which had been so trounced in 1859. In the towns the suffrage was to be granted to a £7 clear annual value: in the counties, to an occupation of houses or houses with land ranging respectively from a £14 to a £50 rental, and copyholds were to be assimilated to freeholds. But its accompaniment of redistribution was imperiously postponed. The extreme Radicals, disgusted alike at its moderation and its framer's dictatorship over them, withdrew, and sulked in their "Cave." The "Conservatives," mistrusting the staving off of "redistribution," and anxious for a "rating" rather than a "renting" franchise, opposed it heartily. After a brief spell of victory the Bill fell on this "razor-edge"<sup>1</sup> in committee. Lord Derby was for the fourth time summoned by the Queen and intrusted with the administration which, after some futile approaches to the recalcitrant Radicals, he was able to form with strength and completeness by the opening of the session in February 1867. Thanks to Disraeli, he had at last a powerful party of organised opinion, which he might lead, and to which he could appeal.

<sup>1</sup> Morley, ii. 201.

## CHAPTER VII

### 1867-1874—REFORMER, PREMIER, AND LEADER

Disraeli now leader—Disraeli and Gladstone—Federation of Canada—Home and Foreign disturbances—Disraeli's address to constituents—He resolves on “Reform”—The “Resolutions”—The “Ten Minutes Bill”—The Reform Act—Its provisions—Disraeli on its purport and spirit—Abyssinian expedition and Bribery Bill—Disraeli becomes Premier—Gladstone moves for the destruction of the Irish Church—Grounds of Disraeli's opposition—Disraeli resigns—Gladstone's Premiership—The tenour of his Home and Foreign policy—The German War—American arbitration and “indirect claims”—Lady Beaconsfield's death—Disraeli's great speeches 1872—Catholic University Bill—Gladstone resigns: Disraeli refuses to head a minority—Gladstone dissolves—A Conservative triumph.

**D**ISRAELI once more controlled the Queen's Exchequer and his party in the Commons. In the following year, on Lord Derby's death, he became Prime Minister, and although his space of office was now short it established such an ascendancy both over court and country that he remains a supreme figure to the close.





LORD BEACONSFIELD'S STUDY AT HUGHENDEN

Macaulay well says that government is an experimental science. Henceforward Disraeli and Gladstone stand out as wrestling Titans ; and in fairness the progress of their opinions must in both instances be held sincere. In Gladstone's, it sprang from a constant flux of seething enthusiasms ; in Disraeli's, from the imaginative light focused into an ideal pattern by his early broodings, and the will that never ceased to develop the play of insight shed by it on his mind, over the fitful but inevitable facts which he looked boldly in the face. If Gladstone was "a Jesuit of the closet sincerely devout,"<sup>1</sup> if he was also a popular orator "giving forth in flood what he received in vapour," Disraeli was a master-artist of the world's studio, sincerely subduing his material to his hand. Gladstone was what the French call "*un charmeur*," Disraeli what they know as "*un esprit*." The one's pliability lacked that judgment for the whole which he displayed in its parts ;<sup>2</sup> the other's fantasy pierced below its less coloured environment, which it comprehended

<sup>1</sup> Disraeli's phrase in *The Press* some ten years earlier ; cited by Mr. Morley.

<sup>2</sup> He had himself impugned both Palmerston's and Russell's truthfulness in 1856 ; yet in 1843 he had written : ". . . In these times the very wisest and most effective servants of any cause must necessarily . . . be liable to incur mistrust and even abuse. But patience and the power of character overcome all these difficulties" (Morley, i. p. 260).

while it transformed. Disraeli's action was that of one who plays the chief part in a drama composed by himself; Gladstone's that of an actor magnificently rendering the works of others,—and in this sense it was evanescent. How curious the inverting ironies of their end: that of Gladstone in the very atmosphere which he wrongfully persisted in attaching to his rival; that of Disraeli in the firm security of delayed recognition!

Lord Derby returned to power, and one of his Ministry's first acts was an imperial one—the Federation of Canada, to be followed in Disraeli's last administration by a scheme for confederating South Africa. He was unpledged to Reform. Of Reform he was indeed past-master, for his young energies had carried through the arrangement of 1832. But he was old and ailing, and we may guess that his own and Disraeli's parts of 1859 might be now inverted; that the general shrank from the certain combat which his aide-de-camp now desired to hasten. Against this view, however, there is the specific evidence of Disraeli's secretary, Mr. Earle, who seems to have told Mr. Frederick Greenwood that it was Lord Derby who was eager “to dish the Whigs.” In any case the latter expedient in nowise accords with Disraeli's characteristics. He was never an opportunist, still less an “adventurer” in the

vulgar sense of the term. Throughout his life and in all his onsets he had always courage to say and to dare the most unpopular things at the most awkward moments, and he was often content to offend even his party if he could benefit it by waiting, and have the satisfaction of seeing his long and far-sightedness justified. There is no popularity to compare with that of unpopularity proved prescient.

The times were still stormy. Abroad there was double warfare—Austria's with Italy and Prussia's with Austria. Hanover was occupied; after Sadowa the German Bund was dissolved, and Austria had to sign the Treaty of Prague and consent to the transference of Schleswig and Holstein to Prussia. The peace with Italy lost for Austria Venice and the Quadrilateral. At home the twentieth Irish Coercion Bill had been passed. The results of Bright's agitations were breaking the peace. Even Gladstone's house was mobbed by workmen clamouring for the “right” of representation. Bright was still a mutineer against the leader he adored, but the idol-breaker soon converted the idol.

With Continental entanglements the Government resolved not to mix. Disraeli in a speech to his constituents pointed out that England's legitimate area of “interference” must be found elsewhere. She was “no longer a mere European

power—she is the metropolis of a great maritime empire extending to the boundaries of the farthest ocean. . . . She has a greater sphere of action than any other European power.” She was an Asiatic power; “she interferes in Australia, Africa, New Zealand.” We were friends now with America, and our duty was to check the excess of Irish emigration, which was a “social calamity.” As for Reform, he would not, if need were, shrink from it in the coming year. The ideas of the late Government on the principle of such a measure had been confused. Was it the “rights of man” or the “rights of numbers”? He desired it to be neither of these, but “one in unison with the Constitution of the country.” “*What we wish is that the electoral power should be deposited with the best men of all classes, and that is the principle upon which, if called upon, we shall propose to legislate.*”

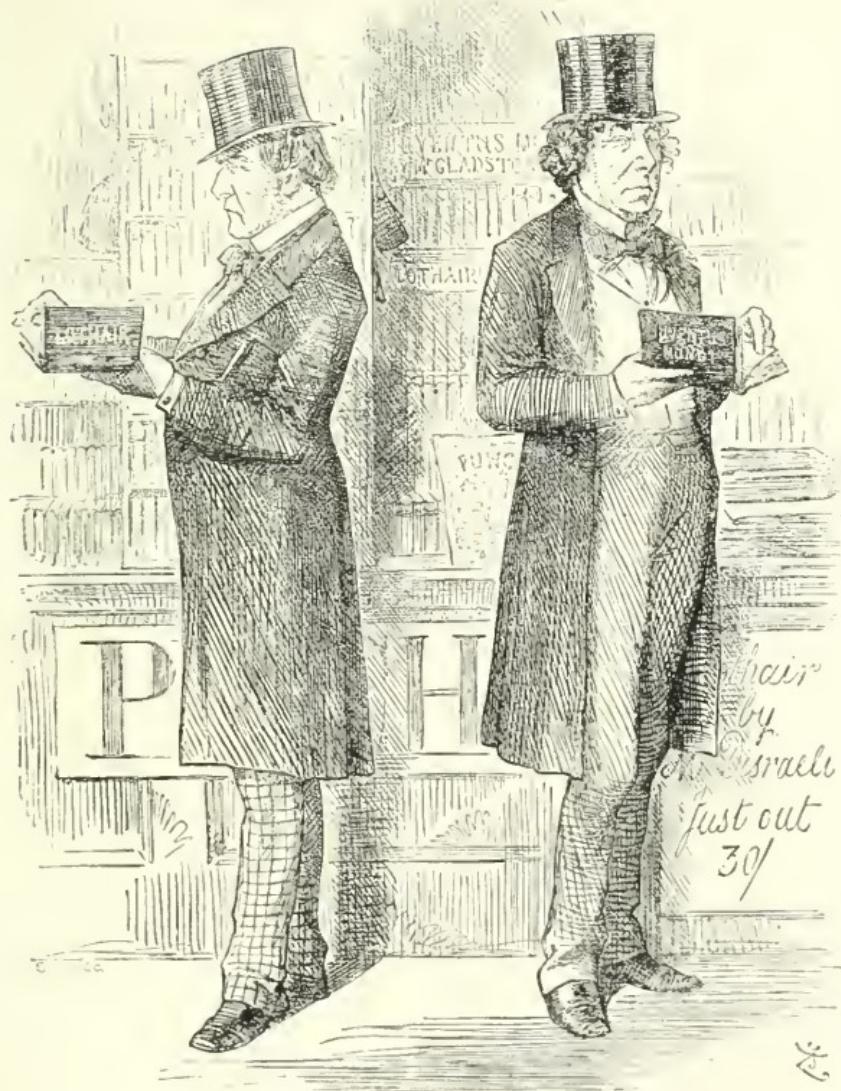
Meanwhile the masses, both unemployed and unemployable, were worked upon to believe that the Conservatives were hostile to a “right” which few of them could ever hope or be entitled to exercise save under some scheme of Manhood Suffrage. Hints were circulated in the newspapers. Bright agitated. The mob howled. He championed their right to meet in public places. In defiance accordingly of law and order they met and rioted, smashing actual windows, and

clamouring for the opening of windows electoral. Disraeli denied in the House that these were “the real working classes.” In them, differing from most of his party, he trusted ; and them he forthwith resolved to emancipate.

He set out on February 5 with general “Resolutions.” Gladstone opposed this method with all his might ; and yet it had not been objected to on the part of Russell in the matter of the India Bill, nor was Gladstone to object when he himself shortly afterwards followed suit concerning the Irish Church. Disraeli was not “angling” for a policy. His scheme had been carefully prepared. But he recognised that without co-operation its success would be impossible with so small a Conservative majority as Parliament now exhibited. Moreover, Lord Derby’s natural timidity shuddered on the brink of the uncertain, as was soon to be proved. It was for co-operation that Disraeli “angled.” In the ensuing scenes his difficulties were not so much even with the most virulent of his opponents as with his own half-supporters. It was by general union alone that he could hope to pass a measure in which he foresaw the omens of a bettered multitude attached to institutions, and to allay the restlessness that had so long blocked the progress of social reforms. It was not by sops to the dregs, but by national consent,

that the boon was to be bestowed, and upon merit. At any rate the country was now agreed on the “rating” principle in boroughs and counties.

The Resolutions failed, and a Bill was demanded. The discussions of the Cabinet were proved by the after-secessions. It was probably much more divided than has been thought. Disraeli’s own Bill, the one finally laid on the table, was in all likelihood far too strong a dose even for Lord Derby to swallow. Disraeli had throughout been intent on completing the Act of 1832 by restoring those popular and political rights of which the working classes had then been deprived. John Bright scornfully said that he had lugged his omnibus full of stupid squires up the hill. A stop-gap was prepared in haste, and the “Ten Minutes Bill” was brought forward. It proposed a £6 “rating” franchise for boroughs, and a £20 occupation one for counties. It retained the suggested “fancy” franchises of 1859, giving representation to thrift, education, and small ownerships in the Funds, and it added one for all paying £1 in direct taxation. Subject to limitations it conceded plurality of voting. Its effect would have been to have added 400,000 to the Register of the thirty seats at the House’s disposal; by the measure new northern and midland boroughs



Mr. GLADSTONE: "H'm! flippant"  
Mr. DISRAELI: "Ha! Prosy"

THE "PUNCH" CARTOON ON "L'OTHAIR" AND "JUVENTUS MUNIFICENTIA  
*by Sir John Tenniel*

1

2  
3  
4

were to receive fifteen, the counties fourteen, the London University one. But the House would have none of it.

The Bill in Disraeli's pocket was one of limited Household Suffrage founded on *residence* and *rateability*. This had been the stone of offence for the Cabinet. Lord Cranbourne (afterwards Salisbury), Lord Carnarvon, and General Peel walked out of it, rather than countenance what they deemed a democratic degradation of the franchise. Not many years went by before they had to confess themselves mistaken. The moderate Liberals were furious, the extreme Liberals wished some of them to use the thin end of this wedge for Manhood Suffrage, others to aggrandise a special class of workman. The succeeding scenes were a pandemonium of disappointment and remonstrance. But Disraeli, certain in his own mind of the present stability of the artisan, resolved to yield as much as was compatible with it, and kept his gaze steadily and confidently on the future. His chief called it "a leap in the dark," many of his followers branded it as desertion, while, outside the arena, the Jeremiah of Chelsea wailed over "Shooting Niagara." Disraeli owned with truth that he would have made any personal sacrifice for a united Cabinet; but this was a public crisis. "First pass the Bill, and then throw out the Ministry if you will"—"Change

is inevitable, but the point is whether that change shall be carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the law and traditions of the people, or whether it shall be carried in deference to abstract principles and arbitrary and general doctrines."

Disraeli's broad contention now was that, once "Rateability" conceded it was vain to fix a lowered limit of value in the boroughs. In 1859 he had thought that if the rent-value was to be lowered, "Household Suffrage" in the towns was the sole alternative. But this need not imply household democracy. Residence and Rating were themselves conditions not wholly "democratic"; and apart from this, the result of the new Act proved that of about four hundred million houses in England, of which after 1832 one million possessed the franchise, only half a million were added in 1867. "Well then," he said in the autumn of that year at Edinburgh, "I want to know if there are four million householders, and one and a half million in round numbers have the suffrage, how can household suffrage be said to be established in England?"

Without Gladstone's co-operation the Bill would have never passed. As amended by countless sittings in Committee, it became, as Disraeli meant it to be, a national and not a party measure; and it thus spelled finality. It is true

that the introduction of the lodger vote opened out a vista of qualified ignorance ; but Disraeli contemplated—as he foreboded already in 1846 —new schemes of education to counteract it, and some of these were passed by the Liberals in 1870. No roving electorate was established by the Bill of 1867, and its growing instruction has equipped its inherent intelligence. Statesmen now, as Lord Palmerston predicted, must “play more to the gallery than to the stalls.” But the “gallery” is devoted to the theatre, and, as all playgoers know, is the best critic. A far more democratic measure, which added a million and a half more voters to the Register, was carried three years after Disraeli’s death. It extended the reduced Household Franchise to the counties and to Ireland (where many householders were only rated at £1), and it would have gone far to approaching a *plébiscite* had not a timely compromise about redistribution neutralised some of its effects. All the same, this lowering of county franchise exposed the country population to the agrarian bias of that “ambitious Radicalism” which Gladstone at once denounced, and oddly enough sought to fasten on “Tory Democracy.” The elections of 1885 were to prove a prime example of Disraeli’s wisdom in restricting the Household Suffrage to the boroughs ; for in that election the town vote was for united nationality, the

vote of the counties, cajoled by the extreme wing of Radicalism, anti-national. But even this Bill has not sundered the "masses" from the "classes," despite the efforts of demagogues to do so. There is no danger so long as Parliament remains a living and working institution. The dread is that it may become inert, and that the increasing and abounding multitude will be thrown on other guidance and leadership.

"The working classes," urged Disraeli, "will now probably have a more extensive sympathy with our political institutions, which, if they are in a healthy state, ought to enlist popular feeling, because they should be the embodiments of the popular requirements of the country. It appeared to us that if this great change were made in the constituent body, there would be a better chance of arriving at the more patriotic and national feelings of the country than by admitting only a more favoured section, who, in consideration of the manner in which they were treated and the spirit in which they were addressed, together with the peculiar qualities ascribed to them, would regard themselves as marked out, as it were, from the rest of their brethren and from the country, and as raised up to be critics rather than supporters of the Constitution."

Disraeli's knowledge of this complex subject was vast and varied, depending on experience and observation ranging from the days of *Sybil* in 1845, and those when he had actually conferred with Feargus O'Connor and the Labour leaders in 1852 to a close criticism of some half-dozen different schemes "for better representation."

The “fancy” franchises (valuable, though then derided, safeguards), the “compound-household” and “dual vote” clauses, were expunged; the lodger-franchise, conditioned by a £10 rental, was passed; and Lord Cairns’ proposal for the representation of minorities in “three-cornered” constituencies was carried. At length, after endless conference and unflagging vigilance, Disraeli saw the franchise established on rating and residence in the towns and £10 rating in the counties. At Edinburgh, in a speech as racy and reasonable as exalted and patriotic, he declared the measure to be a great and elevating one. It caused communities to be represented, not classes; public opinion, not sectarian prejudice; duties, not “rights.” And he added that, remembering all the complicated interests of this great Empire, the dependence of daily toil on daily labour, “the delicate nature of our credit, more wonderful in my opinion than all our accumulated capital”; remembering, further, that “. . . on the common sense, the prudence and the courage of a community thus circumstanced, depends the fate of uncounted millions in ancient provinces,” and that “around the globe there is a circle of domestic settlements that watch us for inspiration and example,” it was only through “the three master influences” of native “industry, liberty, and religion” that the load would be sustained:—

"So long as this sacred combination influences the destiny of this country, it will not die. History will recognise its life, not record its decline and fall. It will say, this is a great and understanding people ; and it is from such materials we make the magnificence of the nation establish the splendour of the terrestrial globe."

The year 1867 was also signalised by the Abyssinian expedition and a Bill for purity of election — small instances of "Empire and Liberty." In 1868 Lord Derby's illness—soon to prove fatal—forced him to abdicate the premiership in favour of Disraeli, who had borne the burden and heat of the day for some twenty years. No one—not even the colleagues who had tried to write him down—was henceforward to usurp his authority. His greatest pleasure was now to testify his grateful devotion to his wife by the Queen's favour in creating her Viscountess Beaconsfield. The ringing cheers of the crowd on March 5, as he walked to the House, witnessed their recognition of his enduring patriotism and undaunted courage. But Gladstone, as if by retort, at once sprang into the breach. His mission, he had said, was now to "pacify" Ireland. He proceeded to do so by the disestablishment and disendowment of her Church. To this impulsive measure Disraeli offered uncompromising resistance. He distinguished between disestablishment —the divorce of secular from religious authority

and union was Mr. Foster's great Education Act, which Disraeli hailed and supported. Its banner was disintegration. Abroad, once more an intrigue of succession was perverted by Prussia into a move on her great chess-board of ambition. In 1870 the German War broke out. The Government disavowed the action of their special envoy to Berlin. Disraeli rebuked them, and always maintained that had they behaved firmly to Napoleon and fairly to King William this mighty movement might have been stayed. Then followed the Black Sea Conference of 1871, which tore up the treaty-clause which alone prevented the Euxine from becoming a Russian lake—the sole real object of the resumption of the Crimean War. And, worse than all, a blundering policy in relation to America frustrated the real purport of the Alabama arbitration, and caused America's preposterous "indirect claims." Moreover, in 1872 there was added a bothersome Ashanti war.

But Gladstone continued his violent course, and more and more approximated to the "Adullamites" who had seceded in 1866. It should not, however, be forgotten that twice at least Disraeli defended him against them with no uncertain voice. Once when he reproved "the spouters of sedition" for besetting one who united Conservative instincts to explosive affinities which clashed

with them. Again when they reproached that chief at the end of his tether on his date for dissolution,<sup>1</sup> and Disraeli poured scorn on their faint-hearted disloyalty to the leader whose high purpose and splendid eloquence had alone been able to erase their bickerings. All this time, although he emerged on critical occasions, he maintained a reserved retirement, and was writing *Lothair*, which displayed the league between Romanism and Radicalism, the various revolutionary ideals in Italy and Ireland, and the social kaleidoscope of the epoch.

In 1872—the very year when Lady Beaconsfield's death desolated him—his great speech at Manchester on the reality of institutions, and the hopes and aims of the Tory party as their maintainer, repeated in wise maturity what he had taught in his enthusiastic prime. The citadel of the economists welcomed his ideas and hung upon his utterances. It was clear to him that he had become a popular force in the country, that

<sup>1</sup> “ . . . If I had been a follower of a parliamentary chief as eloquent, even if I had thought he had erred, I should have been disposed rather to exhibit sympathy than to offer criticism. I should remember the great victories which he had fought and won ; I should remember his illustrious career ; its continuous success and splendour, not its accidental or even disastrous mistakes.”—Morley, ii. 496. To this instance of magnanimity should be added Disraeli's conduct to the persecuted Dr. Kenealy.

Gladstone's harassing policy had touched the pocket of commerce, and that the class panaceas of the economists, who had even attacked monarchy as expensive—an illusion which he exposed—were on the wane. He urged the need of repose for the furtherance of social and of sanitary legislation. He denounced the Irish horrors of an alien and anarchist Fenianism. How had the Government met the emergencies of the hour?

" . . . Their specific was to despoil churches and plunder landlords, and what has been the result? Sedition rampant, treason thinly veiled," and "candidates returned pledged to the disruption of the realm. Not satiated with the spoliation and anarchy of Ireland, they began to attack every institution and interest, every class and calling in the country."

With regard to foreign affairs—

" . . . Don't suppose because I counsel firmness and decision at the right moment that I am of that school of statesmen who are favourable to a turbulent and aggressive diplomacy. I have resisted it during a great part of my life. . . . The Queen of England has become the sovereign of the most powerful of Oriental states.<sup>1</sup> On the other side of the globe there are now establishments belonging to her teeming with wealth and population, which will in due time exercise their influence over the distribution of power. The old establishments of this country, now the United States of America, throw their lengthening shades over the Atlantic, which mix with European waters. These are vast

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the transfer of the East India Company to the Crown.

and novel elements in the distribution of power. I acknowledge that England's policy with respect to Europe should be a policy of reserve, but proud reserve; and in answer to those statesmen—those mistaken statesmen who have intimated the decay of England and the decline of its resources—I express here my confident conviction that there never was a moment in our history when the power of England was so great, and her resources so inexhaustible."

This oration, unfolding the principles which he had laid down in 1833, the union of social improvements and constitutional progress with imperial greatness, concluded with the word "Empire." The strain was resumed in its pendant—the "Crystal Palace" speech of the same year. He again pressed home the need for "humanising toil" and the "policy of sewage." He again struck the imperial note. He had some years previously outlined a far-reaching and far-seeing policy for the confederation of the Colonies. In the former speech he painted in an immortal passage the condition of the Government. "Extravagance was replacing 'energy' —

"... Their paroxysms ended in prostration. Some took refuge in melancholy, and their eminent chief alternated between a menace and a sigh. As I sat opposite the Treasury Bench, the ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest. But the situation is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea."

Gladstone said with truth that Disraeli's parliamentary wit had never been matched.

Disraeli could now afford to wait two years more, in the second of which he was made Lord Rector of Glasgow University. Gladstone completed his Irish Trilogy by a Catholic University Bill so framed as to forbid all those deeper studies of philosophy and theology dear alike to the Catholic and the Protestant traditions. The former were furious, and this concession to Bright's Radicalism wrecked the measure. In March 1873 Gladstone resigned on a defeat by three, and Disraeli was requested by the Queen to form an administration. The Government tactics were to compel his return to power with a minority in the House, which must speedily compel a dissolution. This would have caused a deadlock in administration which Disraeli refused to sanction as a precedent, while he wished Gladstone to dissolve so as to expose the Liberal divisions and to accentuate their Irish error. He respectfully declined to come in, nor could he in conscience advise a dissolution. The Ministry carped, but struggled on with Burial Bills and the like till the following year, when the Stroud and Newcastle elections swept away Gladstone's last shred of electoral delusion. Suddenly he dissolved on a promise of income-tax remission. The Ballot Act of 1872 did not counteract the popular weariness.

ness of the champions of penny wise “economy” and burdensome “equality”; nor did it diminish the horse-play of the polls. The result forced Gladstone into resignation, and at length Disraeli resumed the reins of power with the full mandate of the nation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### 1874-1881—"IMPERIUM ET LIBERTAS"

Disraeli's intended task—His many and many-sided measures for social, industrial, and sanitary improvement—Other Bills—Public Worship Act—Storm-clouds in the East—Purchase of Suez Canal shares—Empress of India Bill—Andrassy Note—Berlin Memorandum—State of the Porte—Russia's action in Bulgaria—Gladstone's agitation—The stirring events of 1877 and 1878—Disraeli keeps the peace—He calls out the Reserves and orders the Indian troops to Malta—His appeals to patriotism—Berlin Congress—Bismarck's admiration—The outcome of Disraeli's foreign policy—Its main principles—Indian affairs—The "Scientific Frontier"—African affairs—The Zulu War—Feeling in the country and conduct of the Opposition, 1874-1880—The Radical propaganda—Indian affairs—Ireland—Disraeli's last year—He resigns—The "Marlborough Letter"—Disraeli's death—Public tributes and sympathy—His gifts and qualities summarised.

DISRAELI now longed to bend himself to the federation of the Colonies, to his "health" policy at home, to the appeasement of Ireland. But both Time and Fate were

against him. The strain of effort, literary and political, the weight of nearly seventy years were beginning to tell ; and ere long the passions of conflicting races in Eastern Europe, with the ply of them by Russian ambition renewed through the opening of the Black Sea,<sup>1</sup> were to dash these fond aspirations to the ground.

In 1872 he had alluded to his hope that the relations between Capital and Labour might be bettered, while he had guarded himself from favouring "strikes," so often coincident with a "roaring trade"—itself a feature that he partly ascribed to the influx of the precious metals. And in his Guildhall speech of 1874, alluding to the "Conservative working man" brought into prominence by his Act of 1867, he urged, "What is land without liberty, and capital without justice?" "The working classes," he resumed, "have inherited personal rights which the nobility of other nations do not yet possess. Their persons and their homes are sacred. They have no fear of arbitrary arrests or of domiciliary visits" (for this and the succeeding sentence he was exposed to insinuations of hitting against Germany, which he denied). ". . . They know very well that their industry is unfettered, and that by the law of this country they may com-

<sup>1</sup> In 1874 the Czar personally thanked Gladstone for his action in 1871.

bine to protect the interests of labour. . . . Surely these are privileges worthy of being preserved.” “The employer and the employed,” he said in the following year and the same place, “sit under the same laws.” Small wonder that Labour demanded improvement. He was still true to the cause of “Young England.”

If one had to point to the definite measures of which he was proudest, it would not be to the great Act of 1867, to the reorganisation of his party, to the long and brilliant “education” of the country, or to the dazzling triumph to come at Berlin. It would be to the unshowy and many-sided social, sanitary, and industrial reforms that ever engaged his heart. It is sometimes objected that he pointed the path which he did not follow. Gladstone spoke, and immediately he did—in haste. Disraeli waited long and patiently for the ripe moment. It is well to set down some of the achievements for the elevation and security of toil, and for the betterment of health, freedom, enlightenment, and justice, which he effected (or which were effected with his sanction and sympathy), and most of them (though I have mentioned others before) during this his only long tenure of office. There had been Lord Shaftesbury’s Factories Acts, and those protecting young children. There were, among many others, the Artisans’ Dwellings Acts; the Employers and

Workmen Act; the Elementary Education Act; that handling Irish University education; the Building Act, which protected savings; the Land Transfer Act, which simplified title; the laws to prevent overcrowding, and those for the preservation of open spaces in London, and against the enclosure of commons; measures for public swimming baths, for the assurance by the Board of Works of the safety of buildings; the Act which transferred the endowed schools to the Charity Commission; the Act guarding against contagious diseases in animals; the Agricultural Holdings and Security for Improvements Bills; the Public Health Act; the Friendly Societies Acts; many sanitary laws, including those against pollution and adulteration of drugs, of food, of seeds; the Merchant Shipping Act; the Unseaworthy Ships Bill;<sup>1</sup> laws establishing cheap County Courts, and dealing with the reform of the law courts, with prisons, with the appointment of a public prosecutor; and with regard to distant lands, the measure dealing with the East African slave-trade. Then, too, in respect of public safety, there was the Security of Person Bill, the Irish Peace Preservation Bill—"a measure of necessity framed in a spirit of conciliation," and others. His legislation both for labour and for safety was all framed on the

<sup>1</sup> Their originator had been Mr. Plimsoll.

principle of “permissiveness,” and when he was taunted that it was “wanting in principle,” he always answered “in the principle of compulsion” which distinguished the Radical reforms, which, he contended, “injured social reform by incessant and harassing legislation.” His watchword was “Persuasion in action.” And there were also many reforming enactments for different classes and countries; for Army Discipline and Regulations; for Regimental Exchange; for Crossed Cheques; for Magistrates; for Licensed Victuallers; for Rating; for Woodlands and Mining; for the Scotch Church; for South African Confederation; for Royal Titles;<sup>1</sup> while the Public Worship Act of 1874—pioneered by Archbishop Tait—was directed against a decadent and amateur ultramontanism, parading the “Mass in masquerade.” Surely no meagre programme for six years beset with enormous dangers and difficulties in India, Turkey, and Africa.

Already in November 1875, at the Lord Mayor’s banquet, he prophesied the trouble looming in the East with that unerring instinct for the drift of events and the march of ideas which distinguished him. At the same time, amid the jeers of the Opposition and their leader’s reproach of “insanity,” he carried the purchase of the Suez

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for a fuller list Mr. Ewald’s *Lord Beaconsfield*, v. p. 517.

Canal shares which secured England's interest on one of the high-roads to India, and was justified by Disraeli in a sentence repeating Bolingbroke—that “England is a great Mediterranean Power.” Disraeli's imperialism was defensive not aggressive, and he now so declared it. The *coup* at Suez would ensure “the free intercourse of the waters” in “the great chain of fortresses from London almost to India.” This step was followed not many months later by the proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India. In so doing Disraeli was only pursuing the spirit of his speeches on the Indian Mutiny. The Colonies, he urged, were constantly being brought into relation with sovereignty; not so the Indians, though the Orient was more impressive by its symbols. A perfect hurricane of Radical obloquy swept over this measure. “Empire,” it was objected by ignorance, was a new-fangled word with a vulgar meaning. But Elizabeth and her two poets, every great English statesman from Somers to Peel and Russell themselves,<sup>1</sup> the mildest of poets, Cowper, had used it, and thrilled at its inspiration. Lord Salisbury well observed that Disraeli was resuming a broken thread; and that thread had been broken by those very Radicals whose prejudices obscured the great issues which short memories could not even

<sup>1</sup> Peel called it “glorious.”

remember. During the debate, illustrated by a speech from Disraeli of surpassing interest, and the communication from a young lady “with a very pretty name”—Miss “Lilian Craven,” Lowe was abased by having to recant the violent nonsense (about two preceding Ministers not being servile enough to comply with an abuse of prerogative) which he had discoursed at East Retford. Gladstone, Disraeli (for the late Lord Derby), and the Queen herself, denied it, and this reckless vituperator was quietly put to shame. It is well known that the then editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* informed the foreign minister, Lord Derby, that a foreign syndicate was treating for them with the Khedive; but it is extremely unlikely that Disraeli was unaware of the fact, especially as he had long been intimate with the Rothschilds, and the scheme was one especially congenial to his imagination.

In 1876 the insurrection against Turkish mis-government broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was supported by Servia and Montenegro. The Porte itself was exposed to every internal weakness that could aggravate the position—a feeble Sultan dying, another soon to be assassinated, intrigues in the palace, disaffection out of doors, pressing creditors, and imminent bankruptcy. The sole hope lay in the Young Turkish Party, with whose liberal aspirations Abdul Hamid,

the eventual ruler, and Midhat Pacha, the firm reformer, were then in unison so far as these were compatible with strong government. At the close of the year Austria propounded to the Powers the "Andrassy Note," outlining certain general reforms, including a means towards peasant proprietorship. This note Disraeli supported ; but events soon made it diplomatic waste-paper. The Berlin Memorandum followed, which joined "material guarantees and material interference" to material reforms, and which would have stultified the new Sultan by forcing him into immediate and impossible performance of promises wrung from the Turk in despair. An inevitable occupation by force must precipitate war. Disraeli refused his adherence on these grounds. He was conciliatory to Russia so long as she respected her just limits as a moral "protectress," but it became daily clearer that her old game of twisting a mission of deliverance into a pretext for annexation was in view. Her eye was on Constantinople and on India. When Abdul Aziz died she stirred up the Bulgarians into revolt by manœuvres which there is no space here to detail. Our ambassador at Constantinople wrote that in the mountain villages, by turns Moslem and Christian, the spirit of reprisal reigned equally, and had been fomented from abroad. It was not a question

of religions but of races, and the Western strain in a mongrel population had become the aggressor. The Turks provoked are always fanatical and savage. Horrible scenes ensued, for carnage in the East is callously brutal; and Russia, like Mephistopheles in the wine-cellar, beheld the fumes, administered by her, turn to flames among the victims of her own ambition and Moslem fury. Gladstone — who had “retired” for the nonce, and had, so to speak, taken his “benefit” — returned impetuously to the charge. With marvellous eloquence and energy he piled pamphlet on pamphlet, scoured Midlothian with speeches, and retailing the ill-information of a section of the Press here, and the designed reports from Russia, appealed to the conscience of the nation. His sympathy with the Greek Church, of which Russia had long alleged herself the champion, had more to do with this burning desire to displace the Government than “humanity.” When Poles or Jews had been menaced he had been mute. Disraeli, undeterred by aspersion, stood his ground — the position that Palmerston had taken up. “We are,” he urged, “the Sultan’s allies, together with Russia and Austria, in a tripartite treaty. These are our engagements, which we endeavour to fulfil. We cannot treat them as wind and chaff — engagements renovated and repeated

only four years ago. We cannot expel the Turks ('bag and baggage') to the other side of the Bosphorus. Otherwise politics cease to be an art, statesmanship becomes a mere mockery; and instead of being a House of Commons faithful to its traditions and . . . influenced by sound principles of policy, we had better at once resolve ourselves into one of those revolutionary clubs which settle all political and social questions with the same ease as the honourable and learned member."<sup>1</sup> We had great and material interests to safeguard. We were an Eastern Power, swaying the destinies of vast Mahometan populations in distant and vital parts of the Empire, and our vacillation would soon rouse them to rebel. The "Bulgarian atrocities," exaggerated as they had been into depopulation and general "impalement," were horrible, and must revolt every humane heart; but far worse bloodshed and misery would ensue by the wanton provocation of a European war. The Opposition and the Nonconformists were not monopolists of the milk of human kindness; nor certainly was Russia, for whom there was room in Asia to expand, but against whom Constantinople must be closed, as well as India, whether through Constantinople or through Egypt or through Persia. The Black

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Evelyn Ashley. Only a fragment of this speech (Aug. 11, 1876) is here summarised.

Sea was not to become a Russian lake. Turkey, like Afghanistan, was a political necessity. Fixed limits, definite boundaries, respected treaties, formed a basis for courteous but unbending firmness. Our cause was that of the Empire and of “British interests abroad.” Such is his policy collected from his speeches.

It was insinuated that he was pro-Turkish because pro-Semite. Never was an unhappier instance of misguided calumny. As if in his earliest novels, and when fresh from his Eastern travels, he had not seathed Turkish fanaticism;<sup>1</sup> as if the Turks themselves, even after 1840, had treated the “People of the Book” anything like as well as the Greeks treated them; as if Ottomans were Semites; as if the Afghans, whom Disraeli was shortly to oppose with all his might, were not Semites; as if the transference of Bessarabia to Russia were pro-Semite; as if every British statesman seeking to curb Russia in Eastern Europe or Central Asia had been pro-Semite; as if the Black Sea were Gentile and the Bosphorus a Jew! Gladstone would have been better advised to have urged instead that Midhat, the leader of the enlightened Reform Party in Turkey, was of Israelite extraction.

Events moved quickly. The Russians crossed the Danube. Servia joined the fray. A military

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Alroy, Iskander, Contarini Fleming*.

attaché was despatched to Philoppopolis. The Government received secret intelligence of "wild" schemes on the part of Russia. The "Mediterranean Squadron" was created and ordered to Besika Bay. Disraeli, in an Aylesbury speech, lamented that the country, agitated by Gladstone, shrank from backing up a policy which would favour reform and prevent war. "Sublime sentiments" were not "true humanitarianism." How strangely were these words to be confirmed in 1885, when such "humanitarianism" refused Gordon's cry for Zobeir's governorship of the Soudan, and thus prepared the deserted hero's destruction! Suddenly Russia pressed for a long truce, Turkey for a short one. But the Czar's agent also proposed an armed occupation of Bulgaria and a joint demonstration of the allied fleets in the Bosphorus. The Porte promulgated reforms and offered a short armistice to Servia. Russia alone held out.

Disraeli supported the longer period suggested by Russia and endorsed by Germany, but he declined armed demonstration. He still sought to keep the peace, and his commerce with Russia remained studiously polite. At the same time our Ambassador was instructed to press the Russian terms on the Porte, and if they were refused, to quit. Germany's mediation was invited, the shorter truce eventually agreed upon,

and the Conference of Constantinople begun, which was to compass the "general peace of Europe" and the "amelioration" of the Christian subjects of Turkey. Lord Salisbury repaired as special ambassador. It demanded, however, grave infractions of the Treaty of Paris, which we resisted. The Gladstonian agitation frustrated this last effort for European peace, and the Conference broke up amidst general discord. The Russians counted on a divided England, the Porte on rumours of Russian disablement, the Austrians on the certainty that, in any case, they would gain a province.

"It is only," re-urged Disraeli in February 1877, "by bringing our minds, free from all passion, to a calm and sagacious consideration of this subject, by viewing it like statesmen, that we can secure the great interests of this country, too often forgotten in declamatory views of circumstances with which we must deal practically." The Duke of Argyll then charged him with opposing the Concert of Europe; but Disraeli rejoined by pointing out that in one point at any rate English and European tradition were agreed—the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire as the sole means of averting worse calamities to Europe.

All, however, proved fruitless. Russia quitted the Concert. Turkey remained obdurate. War

was declared in that very summer of 1877. Disraeli announced our attitude of "conditional neutrality." The war had now been caused by the fault of Turkey herself. The Queen's approval of Disraeli's course was evidenced by her visit to Hughenden at the close of the year.

The startling events which soon ensued at last aroused the patriotism of the country. Plevna fell. The Russians thereupon marched south into the Balkans and manœuvred a provisional, a separate, and a clandestine peace at Adrianople. Pending this, the fleet was ordered to quit Besika and steam up the Straits. People supposed that now was the time for Britain to strike. Lord Carnarvon resigned. Bright thundered, "Business before patriotism." Lowe sneered, "Muzzle your Premier." Gladstone assured Oxford that all his energies were intent on counterworking "what I believe to be the purposes of that man."

Still Disraeli held his neutral ground. He was hampered by Cabinet dissensions and public outcry. But his best chance for peace lay in presenting a firm front to Russia, who at length began to show her hand. Napier was summoned from Gibraltar. The dockyards and arsenals were ordered to work at high pressure.

Russia stole one step farther. She signed the

Treaty of San Stefano with Turkey, providing for a huge Bulgaria stretching from the Danube to the Ægean. From river to seaboard Turkey was now within grasp of the Muscovite claws. The Treaty "completely abrogated Turkish independence in Europe," and Russia enjoined that not one clause should be communicated to the Allies.

Disraeli demanded a Congress at which the European signatories of the Paris Treaty could consider the terms which affected them all. The Congress was virtually refused. Russia would be willing if Austria consented. Disraeli called out the Reserve forces. Lord Derby resigned. He agreed on the end, but not on the means. It was feared that Disraeli meant to seize Egypt, and could he then have done so, Germany would have backed him up. But as the courage of Disraeli's colleagues sank, his own and his country's rose. The calling out of the Reserves, he said, was not the last, but the first, resource under our system. Disraeli was "conscious and confident" that his policy would tend to the "maintenance of the Empire, the freedom of Europe, and to the greatness and security of this country." He refused to drum Turkey out of the European Concert. He appealed to the patriotism of the Opposition. Every party was a "Trustee for the Empire." In July 1878 Lord

Beaconsfield—for failing health had in 1876<sup>1</sup> compelled him to quit the Lower House, which he loved and where he had passed his life, for that whose dignity it is agreed that he adorned—delivered a magnificent description of what the British Empire means for the world. It must be maintained

“ . . . By the same qualities that created it—by courage, by discipline, by patience, by determination, and by a reverence for public law and a respect for national rights. In the east of Europe at this moment some securities of that Empire are imperilled. I never can believe that at such a moment it is the Peers of England who will be wanting to uphold the cause of this country. . . .”

The calling out of the Reserves was soon matched by the summons of the seven thousand Indian troops to Malta. Lord Beaconsfield's object was twofold. Since Russia purposed India, he designed to impress Russia and India at once. Granted that it was a stroke of the theatre, yet undoubtedly the world *is* a stage, and it succeeded. It stirred the national imagination. Russia at last recognised that Britain was united, and she paused before the gates of Constantinople. Until the secret history of the years 1877 and 1878 is revealed, and the parts played in it by Bismarck

<sup>1</sup> August. His own name is difficult to forego, and my narrative has deferred the mention of his title for some two years after it was bestowed.

and Schouvaloff, full justice cannot be done to Lord Beaconsfield's foreseeing promptitude, and presence both of mind and imagination.

The Berlin Congress at last took place in July, through the "honest brokerage" of Bismarck, who has recorded his high admiration of Lord Beaconsfield's part in it. The difficulty was at least threefold. The European Concert must be solidified as a pledge for peace and a means for provincial improvement. At the same time the practical independence of Turkey had to be ensured, while the Panslav party in Austria and the aggressive military faction in Russia—anxious to "cool the hoofs of their horses in the waters of the Oxus," or to "*εργάλαττα* in sight of the Caspian"—must be curbed and thwarted. Foreign autocracy, whether feebly "Constitutional" or distinctly "Bureaucratic," had each its perils for Britain. But the main obstacle was the condition of the Danubian provinces themselves:—

"There is no language which can describe it adequately. Political intrigues, constant rivalries, a total absence of all public spirit, and of the pursuit of objects which patriotic minds would wish to accomplish, the hatred of races, the animosities of rival religions, subject to the absence of any controlling power that could keep these large districts in anything like order—such were the sad truths which no one who has investigated the subject could for a moment gainsay."

All these objects were attained at Berlin by a

Treaty which gave Turkey a real frontier, the valley of Alashkerd, the rich province of Bayazid, the impregnable barrier of Erzeroum in Asia, near the Euphrates, and the important port of Burgos in Europe, on the Black Sea ; while it sopped Russia with Bessarabia, Kars, and Batoum, entrusted to Austria the civilisation of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian provinces ; created a double yet limited Bulgaria, with free institutions in one of its divisions, and guarantees for progress in both ; left Turkey lopped of unwieldy limbs, it is true, but unpartitioned, and compact enough to develop her dominions and defend her capital, while it displayed England as the arbiter and mediator of Europe. The preceding Schouvaloff memorandum and the Anglo-Turkish agreement ensured to the one the division of the curtailed Bulgaria into “Bulgaria” and “Eastern Roumelia”; to the other, our acquisition of Cyprus as a place of arms and point of strategy both for Egypt and the Euphrates valleys—two main avenues to India which had been marked as such by the young Disraeli on his Eastern tour, and as such prophesied and described in *Contarini* and in *Tancred*. These arrangements, both private, were both vehemently denounced by the Gladstonians.

The central aims and machinery of the Congress, like those of the Reform Bill of 1867, were

Beaconsfield's own, but like them again, the forms and distribution of parts were necessarily those of the Assembly whose unanimity, so hard to win, so nearly foiled, was a condition precedent of success.

Bismarck said of him at the Congress that he did not so much “represent” England : rather he *was* England. And he admired the tact, courage, patience, and resourcefulness that were abundantly displayed despite the inroads of failing health. Lord Beaconsfield returned home in the triumph of national and royal gratitude, and proclaimed “Peace with honour.” Of that moment Gladstone afterwards gracefully and generously quoted :—

“Aspice ut, insignis spoliis Marcellus opimis,  
Ingreditur, victorque viros supereminet omnes.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1885–86 the two portions of Bulgaria were re-pieced ; and it has been objected that Beaconsfield's policy proved a failure. I cannot regard even this change as indicating anything of the sort. It became possible only through those autonomous institutions which he implanted in Eastern Roumelia, and it was the gift not of Russian militarism but of native progress. But outside this alteration (which was one not of

<sup>1</sup> “See where Marcellus, crowned with triumph, rears  
His noble crest, and masters all his peers.”

spirit but of form) all Beaconsfield's main provisions have lasted. The Russians retired finally from Gallipoli. Erzeroum is still Turkey's. The Balkan boundary remains, the Austrian protectorate remains, the Ægean seaboard still baffles Russia's embraces, Constantinople is inviolate, Cyprus is still ours. Many reforms have been accomplished, and though recent events have seen (and from the same causes) another fair province abominably victimised, the European Concert, which ought to have acted with strength and influence, was crippled, not by this Treaty, which empowered it, but by its own supine selfishness. The Treaty itself, Beaconsfield truly remarked in 1879, contained in it the "principle of evolution."

The Berlin Treaty restored to Great Britain both her prestige on the Continent and her moral influence;<sup>1</sup> and its victory was achieved by the means which he advocated in all his measures—persuasion and not compulsion. The crowning feat of his life had been achieved in age and in illness.

The keynotes of Beaconsfield's foreign policy were fixed boundaries, "scientific frontiers," and respected limits; and of his imperialism, confederation not annexation. Each of these principles received speedy illustration.

<sup>1</sup> A foreign statesman used this expression of it.

Already in 1878 Muscovite stratagem, baffled across the Danube and at Gallipoli, converged on Afghanistan from both sides—the regions of the Oxus and the regions of the Indus. Russia—while war with England was imminent—had equipped an expedition of "courtesy" for the former—perhaps with the objective of Herat. On the latter side, she intrigued at Cabul, where Lord Northbrook's previous policy had yielded her a legitimate opening; and whither we despatched our Envoy, who was rebuffed and defied by Shere Ali. We strengthened Quettah (where since 1876 already we had a resident officer), and the present Lord Roberts brought the moribund Shere Ali to his senses by the rout of Peiwar. Beaconsfield maintained that though Russia had a perfect right, under the circumstances, to equip her Central Asian expedition (as we should have had), she had none to intrigue against us in the perturbed Afghan capital. The Czar recalled his mission. The romantic Viceroy whom Beaconsfield had chosen to govern India published a manifesto about the Ameer's slights and ingratitude, which was bruited with effect through every bazaar in the dominion. It was the North-Western frontier that Beaconsfield singled out for "scientific" rectification in the autumn of 1878. Things could not now, he said, remain as they were. He pointed out that a "scientific" frontier could be defended

by five thousand men, where a “haphazard” frontier, such as then existed, required one hundred thousand for protection. He carried his point. In 1879 he caused the fortress-city of Kandahar to be occupied and annexed. This was a most important and far-sighted move; for that citadel not only guards the gate of the highway to Herat, but it commands a most direct road to Northern India and its routes of commerce. Beaconsfield’s policy was never one of territorial “annexation.” Kandahar was, and is, for our Indian Empire a geographical and political necessity. We still retain a practical command of it from Quettah, which Beaconsfield was the first to mark as a seat of British residency, and which now is a large cantonment. The tragic sequel of the heroic Sir Louis Cavagnari—a naturalised Frenchman, and our former Commissioner in the Punjab—murdered after negotiating the Treaty of Gandamuk in 1879 with Yakub Khan (Shere Ali’s successor), was not only a private but a public misfortune. Its significance was misread by the multitude, and alienated them from Beaconsfield’s far-reaching policy in India—a sphere which perhaps he understood better than any statesman for many generations.<sup>1</sup> In 1880 he declared that “the time had come when this country should acquire complete command and possession of the gates of our Indian

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Peel’s prophecy, p. 95.

Empire,” and that to quit Kandahar under present conjunctures would be “a stain upon our honour.” “Be just,” he concluded, “but be firm.” His Afghan policy had been one counter to “annexation.” It contemplated the government of Afghanistan by its own chief or chiefs. Just as his Turkish policy had relieved the Porte of unwieldy tributaries and made its empire compact and independent, while it sought to bar the possibility of Russia’s approaches through Central Asia ; so his Indian policy sought to make of Afghanistan (which it subsidised) an independent territory warded by English vigilance. If the anarchy which had occurred in Afghanistan through Lord Northbrook’s rejection of the Ameer’s previous approaches had recurred, Russia, he thought, would be justified in profiting by it, and declaring that she could not civilise her portion of Central Asia with such disorders on its frontiers. For England his policy had secured “a powerful and adequate military frontier.” Both in the East and the West, he added, “our object is to have prosperous, happy, and contented neighbours. But these are things which cannot be done in a day. You cannot settle them as you would pay a morning visit.” And in November 1879 he had declared peace abroad to be lasting.

Gladstone, who shortly afterwards undid Beaconsfield’s Indian policy, denounced it as

“insane”; and in 1886 he declared that, unless it had been undone, the Afghans would have regarded Russia as their liberators. Military authorities also afterwards condemned the need for a costly occupation to maintain the policy, although military authorities as eminent had recommended and sanctioned it in 1879. There is just that element of half-truth in these assertions that leads to plausible misunderstanding. Beaconsfield’s policy of guarding the “gates” of India—on the North-West, and at an outpost again of the Euphrates valley—with its accompaniment of justice to Afghanistan, might, had free play been afforded it, have propitiated, not irritated, the Afghans; for their jealousies always hung on dynastic intrigues. But that which happened when six years later Gladstone cried, “We cannot close the book,” and the Russians retreated from Penjdeh, was as much a consequence of his confused policy in Egypt and the Soudan as our recent war with the Boers flowed from his fatal decision to make terms after a beating. It was in panic that we scuttled out of Kandahar, and panic always means weakness to the Eastern mind.

The second example of his principles was the Zulu War.

In 1879 the Transvaal had also become a “geographical and political necessity.” Disraeli had adopted Sir Bartle Frere’s large and long-sighted

schemes for the confederation of South Africa. The bankrupt Transvaal, harassed by the border tribes, had requested to become a British province, and besought British offices in their quarrels about lands with the Zulu chief. Sir Bartle differed from our special Commissioner as to the terms which ought to have been accorded to Cetshwayo. He formulated others as an ultimatum. War was the result, and victory after a terrible disaster and a gallant defence. In a powerful speech of February 1879, Beaconsfield vindicated his policy and that of Sir Bartle, whom he refused to sacrifice to the clamouring Opposition—on the ground that the Queen's prerogative of choosing eminent public servants would be invaded should an exceptional error, if error it were, be held good reason for a recall at once of the Administrator and his policy ; and he retorted with a crowning instance of what in former years the Liberals had done themselves.

Gladstone was converting himself more and more to the creed of Bright. Bright was more and more declaiming “peace at any price”—“that dangerous doctrine,” to quote Disraeli, “. . . which has done more mischief than any afloat this century . . . and has caused more wars than the most ruthless conquerors.” Bright also raised his wail as the Cassandra of the Colonies. We paid the burden, he groaned ; they reaped the benefit. And the Duke of Argyll voiced

Gladstone's indignation over the Berlin Settlement in the Upper House. He disdained to believe in Midhat's promulgation of reforms in Asia Minor. Beaconsfield was now preaching forbearance to Russia, yet "the Duke," he said, "tells Turkey that she cannot depend on us; he tells Russia that she has only to aggress and it will be accepted here." A section of the Church, too, had been provoked by the Public Worship Act. The Nonconformists—restricted and restrictive in their Continental outlook—had been worked up into a frenzy about Eastern affairs. Gladstone was an angel of light; Beaconsfield, the prince of darkness. Helpless and inoffensive Christians, they were told, had been murdered and outraged by bloody and brutal Moslems, while the cynical Premier gloated over the shocking scene. They were unable to learn and unwilling to reflect. The commercial classes again began to imagine that while Gladstone had harried and worried every interest at home, Beaconsfield was repeating the process abroad. Added to these pretexts for discontent and the increased caprice introduced by the recent ballot, were the great agricultural depression and general reaction. In 1879 and 1880 Beaconsfield analysed their causes, which he was convinced were temporary, partly due to a succession of bad harvests, partly to a cessation of that enormous influx of gold which



LORD BEACONSFIELD AND MR. M. CORRY

*This miniature by "Spy" in "Lam's Lam.*



had raised prices, but had soon been followed by the adoption of a gold standard in Germany and by the Latin League. He had always adhered to “Reciprocity”; but the country had decided to leave no tariff duties on which it could negotiate. Rightly or wrongly, it had so determined to cut away the ground for commercial treaties (save through the lever of political advantages), and Reciprocity was therefore dead unless permanent conditions of public distress should at some future time induce the whole community to upset their fiscal and commercial systems. Ireland seemed restful, it is true, but Beaconsfield was not deceived by the surface. “How,” he urged, in November 1879, “can an imaginative race think to encounter economical distress by political agitation!”

The Indian debates early in 1880 brought all these simmering elements to a head. Gladstone urged dissolution. At Easter, Lord Beaconsfield dissolved the Parliament which had done so much in so short a period. But he had previously warned the country in March, when he announced his intention to dissolve, that Ireland was in danger. The “Marlborough Letter,” which urged England to rally against those who, having failed in detaching the Colonies or disrupting the Empire, were now bent on disintegrating the kingdom, was a prophecy. The occasion was critical, but the people were crass. It remained unheeded

for the moment, but a monument for the future. The polls proved disastrous to the Conservatives.

Lord Beaconsfield had for some years bravely concealed even from his friends the serious state of his health. But his spirit was still indomitable. He took his defeat with habitual composure. What disheartened him was the disregard of his Irish warning. An intimate, who called on him just as Gladstone acceded to power, heard only one word from his lips—"Ireland."

The wisdom of his policy can at least be tested by a solid touchstone. Every point of it was reversed by his successors with chaotic results still graven on the heart of the nation. The Ministry that tried strong things with a weak hand and then cancelled them with a wavering one, were doubtless actuated by "good intentions"; but these "intentions" were "'good' in the worst sense of the word."

Since his beloved wife's death, when he sighed, "I have now no home," he had been more and more reserved and preoccupied. He now published *Endymion*—a novel of memories, and chiefly itself memorable for its delineations of Lord Palmerston, of Lady Jersey, of Bismarck, of Louis Napoleon, of Sarah Disraeli. He had taken a short lease (which would "see him out," he said) of a house in Curzon Street where once Count D'Orsay had lived.

In Buckinghamshire, he busied himself with his estate and his tenants. On several great occasions, however, he delivered himself with force and fire in the House of Lords. One was that of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, when he resisted the “no-rent” principle; and on the alarming developments of Irish affairs he was able to vindicate his own derided forebodings, and to recall the Liberal protestations of perfect peace and prosperity in that distracted Ireland. Another was that of the new Government’s Indian abandonments, when he uttered the impressive truth that not Delhi, nor Pishin, but “London is the key of India.”

In the spring of 1881, a chill caught after dining with some friends in London accentuated the graver symptoms which had been long slumbering. With characteristic consideration, he refused to mar the holiday of his devoted secretary, Lord Rowton,<sup>1</sup> who was in Algiers; but eventually he arrived in time to cheer the close. The national anxiety testified that he was now a national hero. The Queen’s attachment was that of deep friendship.

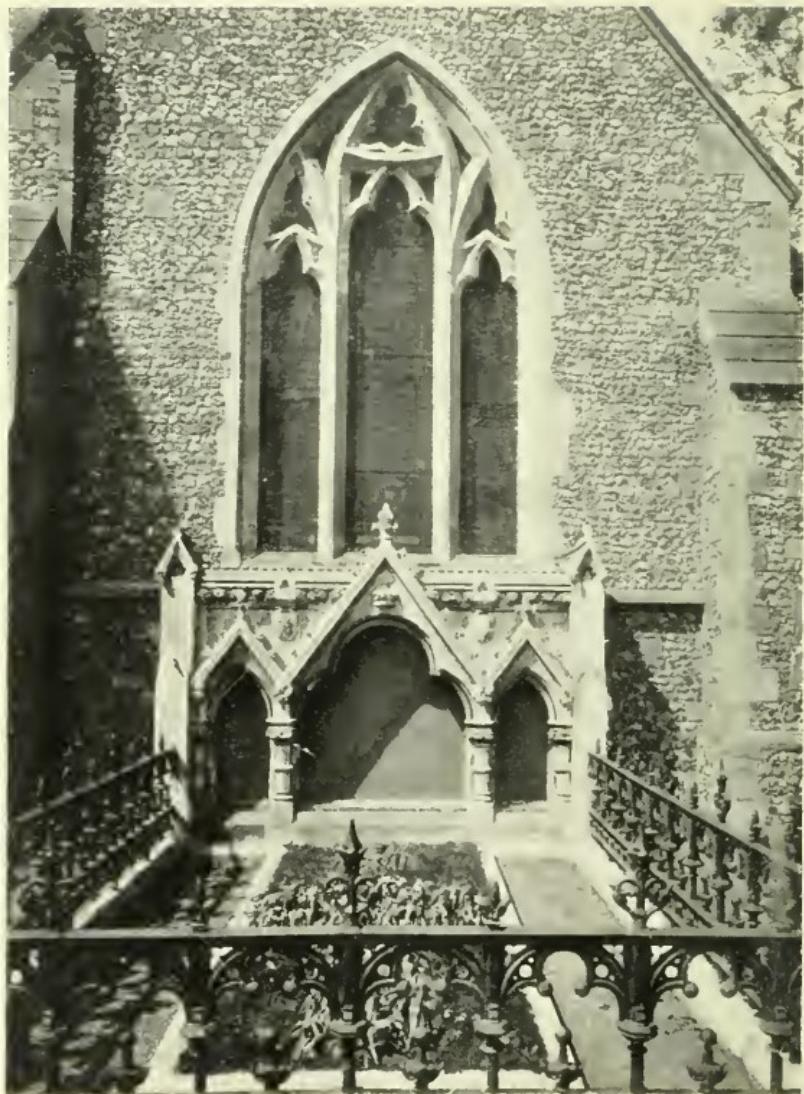
<sup>1</sup> It is familiar how he first met the man who was to be his devoted secretary, and to realise some of his “Young England” dreams, conjuring to amuse a country house party in bad weather; and how he singled him out from the throng.

The end came on the 19th of April. Just before he died consciousness revived, he raised himself and moved his lips as if addressing that Assembly which he had loved and led. Then he sank back and expired.

In private life the "man of mystery" was gentle, generous, and unselfish. In public, "the master of the language of praise and blame" often hit hard, but never "unless he had been first assailed," nor ever at small quarry, or from paltry motives. He never bore rancour when the fight was past. His wit in Parliament, conversation, and literature was exceptional, and it was never empty. It was pith, not foliage, and summarised wisdom. His phrases wielded an enchanter's wand. They were fantastic and spacious, but he never used big words for little things. It was the exotic about them that sometimes perplexed or annoyed. No one could sum up characters and situations with appeals to the ear, the fancy, and the mind more picturesque and penetrating, as Gladstone himself early acknowledged.

Of the many romances in a career full of them, that of the little old lady whom he reluctantly met at the fountain of the 1862 Exhibition, with whom he struck up a warm friendship, who bequeathed him a fortune, and rests near him and his wife, is perhaps the strangest. But





LORD BEACONSFIELD'S TOMB

the ruling romance was undoubtedly the mutual devotion of his married life, which he jealously guarded from the prying gaze of publicity. Sir Horace Rumbold has recently told us how, when Disraeli was invested as an earl, a sob was heard among the crowd of spectators. It was that of an old servant—"Ah! if only *she* could have lived to see this day!"

Of his brilliant authorship, his unique temperament and commanding personality, the writer has discoursed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> All his faults were faults of intensity. Haunted by ideal pictures of life and destiny which he projected by an enormous will-power into action, he sometimes tended to a certain stiffness of ideas, though never to one of mere opinions. He was almost devoid of prejudice. Many and eloquent were the public tributes paid to his genius. Lord Granville singled out his magical career and the compound of wonderful gifts, "seldom residing in one brain," that had unclosed the golden portals and enabled him, in the face of colossal obstacles, not only to lead a great nation but a proud society. Gladstone, in a delicate speech of guarded appreciation, praised his unrivalled courage, the purity of his home example, his loyalty, his unswerving will, and the great part he had played in great transactions.

<sup>1</sup> *Disraeli: A Study in Personality and Ideas.*

Lord Salisbury dwelt on the fact, slowly acknowledged, "as the gratification of every worldly ambition negatived the presumption of any inferior motive," that "zeal for the greatness of England was the passion of his life."

The Sovereign herself raised a simple tablet recording a touching devotion—"Kings love him that speaketh right." Throughout Europe it was felt that an imposing figure had made its exit.

But perhaps his best epitaph is his own deliverance in the farewell letter addressed during the August of 1876 to his constituents, when he became Earl of Beaconsfield, and which repeats the ideas and even the phrases of his pamphlets in 1833 and 1835 :—

" . . . Throughout my public life I have aimed at two chief results. Not insensible to the principle of progress, I have endeavoured to reconcile change with that respect for tradition which is one of the main elements of our social strength. And in external affairs I have endeavoured to develop and strengthen our Empire, believing that a combination of achievement and responsibility elevates the character and condition of a people."

So does it that of an individual. Benjamin Disraeli came to create and not to destroy: to bind and not to loose. He was indeed a doer as well as a dreamer of greatness.



"PEACE WITH HONOUR"

*The "Pinch" Cartoon by Mr. J. H. Tunn.*



## INDEX

- Aberdeen, Lord, (1842) 62, 63 ; and "Peelites" (*q.v.*), 87, 104 ; career and character, *ib.* ; and Crimean War, 106-110.  
Abyssinia, 156.  
Acosta, Uriel, 8.  
Afghanistan, 185-188 ; importance of Kandahar considered, 185, 186 ; Disraeli's policy for, 187, 188 ; "scientific" frontier, 185.  
Althorpe, Lord, (1834) 34.  
Alvanley, Lord, 39.  
America, Disraeli discerns drift of her Civil War, 6 ; (1843) Peel and Gladstone favour Canadian "retaliation" on, 65 ; Disraeli's remarkable insight into causes and effects of the Civil War, 132-134 ; *Alabama*, 159 ; Disraeli on the effect of United America on balance of power, 161.  
Appropriation Clause, 35, 40, 99.  
Argyll, Duke of, on Berlin Treaty, 189.  
Ashanti War, (1872) 159.  
Attwood, T., 29.  
Austin, Charles, 12.  
Austin, Mrs., 12, 16, 18.  
Austria [*and see* Berlin Congress and Treaty], (1855) 108 ; (1853-54) 107 ; (1858-59) 120 ; war with France, 125 ; dispatches regarding, 126 *n.* ; (1866-67) 147 ; (1876) "Andrassy Note," 172 ; (1876-78) ambitious, 177 ; (1878) negotiations for Congress, 179 ; Panslavism, 181, 182 ; results to, of Berlin Treaty, *ib.*  
Aziz, Abdul, 172.

- Baring, John, 11.  
 Barry, J. (artist), 11.  
 Basevi, George, 7, 47.  
 Basevi, Nathaniel, 7, 14.  
 Bentinck, Lord George, and Ireland, 69 *n.*<sup>1</sup>; (1846) 76;  
     “Canning Episode,” 81, 83; (1848) death, 89; Disraeli on, *ib. n.*  
 Berlin Congress and Treaty, 167, 181–184; after results of, 183.  
 Bismarck, Prince, (1864) 137; (1878) 180; on Disraeli, 183; in *Endymion* (“Ferrol”), 192.  
 Black Sea Conference, 114, 159, 166.  
 Blessington, Lady, 17, 31 *n.*, 43.  
 Bliss, Dr. (scholar), 10.  
 Bolingbroke, Lord, 14, 33, *ib. n.*, 34, 37, 38, 45, 56, 67, 106, 170.  
 Borgo, Pozzo, 46.  
 Bright, John, 53 *n.*<sup>1</sup>; and America, 132; thanks Disraeli, 134; and Colonies, 135, 142 *n.*<sup>2</sup>; (1867) violence of his agitation, 147, 148; on Disraeli and Reform, 150; (1878) 178; converts Gladstone (*q.v.*), 189.  
 British Columbia, 120.  
 Brunnow, (1853) 106.  
 Buckingham, Duke of, (1835) 43, 45; (1842) 62.  
 Bulgaria, (1876–77) 172, 173; “Atrocities,” 173–175; (1878) results of San Stefano Treaty, 179; Disraeli on difficulties in, 181; free institutions (Eastern Roumelia), 182, 183.  
 Bulwer, Sir H., alluded to, 31 *n.*<sup>1</sup>.  
 Burdett, Sir F., 29, 47.  
 Burke, Edmund, 14, 34, 45, 122 *n.*<sup>1</sup>.  
 Buxton, Mr., 141.  
 Byron, Lord, 9, 11.  
 “Cabal,” the, (1859) 118 *et seq.*, 125; Disraeli on, 126.  
 Campbell, Sir C., 119.  
 Campbell, T., 30.  
 Canada, 50; (1843) Gladstone grants preference to, 56; “retaliation,” 65; federation of, 146.  
 Canino, Prince of, 30.  
 Canning, G., place as statesman, 2; quoted, 40 *n.*<sup>1</sup>; and Palmerston, 41; and Ireland, 68; and Bentinck, 76, 81; Disraeli’s opposition criticisms (1853–58) modelled on, 110 *n.*\*

\* So also were Disraeli’s fixed ideas on the need of variety in Representation.

- Canning, Lady, 81 *n.*<sup>1</sup>.  
Cardwell, Mr., (1859) 119.  
Carlyle, Thomas, and "Young England" (*q.v.*), 62; and Parliament, 89; Reform Bill of 1867, 151.  
Carnarvon, Lord, Federation, 146; (1867) 151; alluded to, 188.  
Cavagnari, Sir Louis, 186.  
Chalon, 17.  
Chandos, Marquis of (*see* Buckingham), his "Clause," 124.  
Chartism, (1840) 49; (1841-42 51); its causes, 53.  
Chatham, Disraeli on, 1.  
Chelmsford, Lord, 118.  
China, 115, 116.  
Church, 39; (1839-40) 50; (1840-45) 60, 61; (1845) "Maynooth," 70, 71; (1856) Rates, 114, 128; and gaols, 137; (1861-68) Disraeli on, 140-142; (1868) 156, 157; (1874) 169; (1881) 190.  
Clanricarde, Lady, 87.  
Clay, J., 11.  
Clive, Lord, 135.  
"Coalition" Cabinet, (1853) 104 *et seq.*; end of, 109.  
Cobden, R., (1839) 50; unrecognised by Whigs or Tories, 54, 75, 78; Disraeli's intense admiration for, 79 *n.*<sup>1</sup>; Peel's tribute to, resented by Gladstone and Graham, 83 *n.*<sup>1</sup>; (1859) 119; declines Board of Trade, 127; (1860) French Treaty, 129; death, 142.  
Cogan, Mr. (Disraeli's schoolmaster), 12.  
Colburn (publisher), 17.  
Colonies, 50, 56, 65, 90; (1846-53) Disraeli's attitude to, 90, 91; (1852) 102; pronouncements in the 'sixties on, 133-137; a deterrent from British embroilment on the Continent, 148, 162; (1875) 170; and Bright (*q.v.*), 189.  
Corn Laws, 50, 53, 54-60, 98-100, 190, 191.  
Cowper, William, and "Empire," 170.  
Craven, Miss, 171.  
Crimean War, 104-113.  
Croker, 30.  
Cullen, Cardinal, 157.  
Cyprus, 21, 182, 184.  
  
D'Arblay, Madame, 30.  
Denmark — the Danish question — Disraeli's searching analysis of, 137-140.

Derby, Lord, 42 n.<sup>2</sup>; (1842) 62; (1845) and Peel, 73–75; (1846) 75; (1848) and Disraeli, 89; (1852) “Who, who?” Ministry—his leaning towards old Whig friends, 96; Protection, 98–100; unconstitutional course of—coalesced opposition forces to resign, 104; (1855) *gran’ rifuto* of—Disraeli’s wrath at, 109; (1856) intrigues, 113; (1858–59) in haste for Reform, 121; dissolves successfully, 125; (1867) third Administration, 143 *et seq.*; his probable attitude then to the suffrage, 146; illness, 156; death, 144; quoted (1876) on Lowe’s East Retford vituperation, 171.

Derby, Lord (the younger), (1878) 179.

Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield, his place as English statesman, 1–6; democratic and aristocratic principles—unity and empire, 2–4; Conservatism, 5, 14; English and French Revolutions, 5; feudalism and federalism—equality, 5, 6, 25; “duties” and “rights,” 6; an artist, 6; vision and prevision—gift of social perception in movements, 6; birth and family, 7–10; the Laras, 8; early surroundings (*see* Disraeli, Isaac)—schooldays, 12, 13; meant for a Government office—reads in chambers—called to the Bar, 14; political affinities—early American pamphlet—the first *Representative* (*q.v.*), 15; *Aylmer Papillon*, “Modern Dunciad,” 16; *Vivian Grey* (*q.v.*), 17; society and study, 18; his three satires: *Ixion*, *Popanilla*, *Infernal Marriage*, 20; illness, 19, 20–22; verses, 22; *Alroy* and *Iskander*, 23; *Contarini Fleming*, *ib.*; recalled home, (1831) 23; the Reform Bill (*q.v.*)—Peel (*q.v.*) and parties, 24–29; first candidatures, 30–34; retrenchment, 32; position, *ib.*; *What is he?* 25, 34; Radicals, 28; social successes, 30–32; meets future wife (1832), 31; *Gallomania*, 32. (1833) *What is he?* 34; Wycombe speech, 35; Church and Ireland (*q.v.*), 35, 36; defeated, 36. (1834) Peel’s shortlived Ministry—Disraeli’s hopes—“*Tamworth Manifesto*,” 36, 37. (1835) Lyndhurst and “*Vindication of the Constitution*,” 37, 38; Taunton candidature—“Lichfield House Compact”—challenges O’Connell—end of Peel’s Administration, 38–40; Melbourne Administration—literary and political authorship, 40–43; his future wife—Marquis of Chandos, 43; “opportunism” considered, 32, 44–46 (“principles” and measures”), 63–65 (“*Peel Letter*”).

Disraeli, Benjamin—*continued.*

- (1837-42) Accession of Queen Victoria, 37, 46; elected for Maidstone, 47; maiden speech, 47; subsequent speeches, 48, 49; sympathy with Labour—"Young England" (*q.v.*)—Chartism (*q.v.*), 49; Ireland and the Church (*q.v.*), 50; (1841) collapse of the Melbourne Ministry—returned for Shrewsbury, 51.
- (1842) Peel's Ministry and position, 52-58, 62; Disraeli's views and "Young England" (*q.v.*), 58-62; his three great novels, *ib.*; disappointment at being excluded from Ministry—the "Peel Letter" discussed, 63-65; Disraeli's independence illustrated, 64; debts, 65; till 1843 Disraeli supports Peel, 66; Peel's frigidity and "Young England," 66; Disraeli sums up, 67; three great Irish speeches—Disraeli's policy, 67-71; Disraeli's views of Corn Laws and Tariffs—his foresight, 56-59; Land—Labour—Church, 58-62; reciprocity—"physical equality," 58, 59; crisis of 1845-46, 71-78, 190, 191; Disraeli's philippics, 78, 79; admiration for Cobden (*q.v.*), 79 *n.<sup>1</sup>*; opinion of Peel (*q.v.*), 79, 80, 94 *n.<sup>1</sup>*; "Canning Episode," 81; Peel falls, 82-85; coercion, 83 *n.<sup>1</sup>*; Disraeli's purpose in Peel's overthrow, 72, 73; the situation summed up, 84, 85.
- (1846) Effect on parties, 86-88; "Peelites" (*q.v.*)—the Ministry—Palmerston (*q.v.*), 88; dangers of 1848—Disraeli's view, 88, 89, 91; rallies the Tories, *ib.*; as country has chosen "Free Trade," which is an expedient, abandons "Protection," but continues to press for justice to land, which was his principle, 90; Ministerial muddles—Disraeli's parliamentary wit, 90, 95; Disraeli's Colonial attitude, 90, 91; Disraeli's attitude to Jew Bill, 92; the franchise and "Democracy," 92-94; *Press* (*q.v.*) quoted, 93, 94; Disraeli foresees the Crimean War, 95; Lord Derby comes in—Disraeli's "magnanimity"—conciliates "Peelites," 96.
- (1852) Chancellor of Exchequer—his position as regards the land—principles, not measures—struggles for alleviation of burdens—reciprocity—"dropping" Protection—distinction between free opposition and responsible government, 97-101; on the franchise—obstruction by the Coalition—opposition—Disraeli's Budgets, 101-103; Peelites' compact with "Irish Brigade"—a dissolution forced unconstitutionally—"Coalition" Government

Disraeli, Benjamin—*continued.*

come in—Disraeli on it, 104; on Gladstone's Budget, 105; *The Press* (*q.v.*), *ib.*; Disraeli's speeches on Crimean War, 107, 109–114; his plan for settling the question, 112; his anger at Lord Derby's refusal to form a Ministry, (1855) 109; intrigues to dislodge Disraeli, 112; on Palmerston, 113, 115, 116, 129; Indian Mutiny, (1856) 115; China, 115; (1858) Palmerston resigns—Disraeli offers to “lay down,” 115, 117; Derby's second Cabinet—Disraeli again Chancellor and leader, 118; the “Cabal” (*q.v.*), 118, 119, 126; India Bill—Budget, 120; Oaths Bill—Thames Bill, *ib.*; Disraeli's exposition of Reform, 121–125; how the Government was ejected—the “Malmesbury Dispatches,” 126 and *n.* (1859) rallies the party—his view of true “Conservatism,” 127, 128, 160; for retrenchment, 129. (1860–66) Italy, 130, 131; America, 132–135; Colonial Imperialism, 134; his education of party against Radicalism and bare Democracy, 136, 137, 142; *measures for social improvement*, 137, 161, 167–169; Catholic prisoners—Poland (*q.v.*), 137; speeches on Danish imbroglio, 137–140; on the Church (*q.v.*)—(1865) “swamping democracy,” 142; (1866) Russell comes in—Gladstone's Reform Bill, 142, 143. (1867) at last a controlling leader, 144 *et seq.*, 156; Disraeli and Gladstone, 145, 146; Colonial Federation, 146; reform of franchise probably Disraeli's desire—his and Derby's parts reversed from those of 1859, 146; constantly risked unpopularity, 147; Colonial destiny (*see Colonies*), 148; Bright's agitation, 148, 149; the Reform Bill, 149–156; *rateability* and *residence*, 151, 152; “fancy” franchises, 150; not a “household democracy,” 152; lodger vote and surrender of “compound householder,” 123, 153; Disraeli on the measure, 152, 154, 155; “industry, liberty, religion,” 155; Abyssinian expedition, 156; creates wife Viscountess, 156; (1868) Irish Church, 156, 157; date of dissolution—resigns without meeting Parliament—like Gladstone in 1874, 158. (1869) Irish Land Bill, 158, 159; Education Act—German War, 1858—Disraeli defends Gladstone against Gladstone's own supporters, 159, 160. (1872) Manchester speech, 160; principles of foreign

Disraeli, Benjamin—*continued.*

- policy, 161; of social improvement (*see above*, "measures for"), 162; Crystal Palace speech—humanisation of toil—"Health and Home"—Colonial responsibilities—the "exhausted volcanoes," 162; Lady Beaconsfield's death, 160.
- (1874) Lord Rector of Glasgow University—(1873-74) Catholic University Bill—Disraeli's refusal to dissolve or to form Administration, 163; Gladstone's Ballot Act—promise of income-tax repeal—(1874) Disraeli again becomes Premier, 163, 164; his desire to tackle social reforms (*see above*, "measures for social improvement") and Colonial Confederation frustrated by foreign affairs, 165; speeches on Capital and Labour, (1874 and 1875) 166, 167; list of "improvement" measures, 167-169; his failing health, 166.
- (1875, November) discerns the clouds brewing in East, 169; Suez Canal shares bought and Queen Victoria proclaimed Empress of India, both these steps considered, 170; the Russo-Turkish situation, 171; "Andrassy Note"—Berlin Memorandum—conciliation of Russia (*q.v.*), 172; Bulgarian "Atrocities" discussed, 172-174; Disraeli on "bag and baggage," 174, 175; his policy here Palmerston's, 173; "British interests abroad," 175; England an Eastern Power, 174; insinuations *v.* his motives refuted, 175; the course of events—negotiations for truce—his expressed policy to prevent war, 176, 177; Conference of Constantinople, 177; agitation frustrates peace, *ib.*; his pronouncement on, *ib.*
- (1876) becomes Earl of Beaconsfield, 180; the war, 178, 179; fleet ordered to quit Besika Bay—war preparations, 178; Treaties of Adrianople and San Stefano, *ib.*; Congress demanded for all signatories of Treaty of Paris, 179.
- (1878) the Reserves called out—resignations, 179; his pronouncements—refuses to exclude Turkey from the Concert of Europe, 179; speech on what the Empire bodes for the world, 180; summons of Indian troops to Malta, its object, 180; Berlin Congress and Treaty (*q.v.*) discussed, 181-184; keynotes of his foreign policy, 184; Indian policy, 185-188; Afghanistan—Kandahar—"scientific frontier," 185-188; Russia in Central Asia, 187.

Disraeli, Benjamin—*continued.*

(1879) the Zulu War, 188, 189; refuses to sacrifice Sir Bartle Frere, 189.  
 (1880-81) several reasons for country's discontent with Ministry, 189-192; Radicals and Colonies, 189; Non-conformists and Eastern Question, 189; agricultural depression and "reciprocity," his deliverance on, (1879) 190, 191; (1880) Indian debates—Gladstone urges dissolution—in March Lord Beaconsfield dissolves—"Marlborough Letter"—the Liberals return to power, 192; Irish warning, 192; (1881) his brave concealment of illness, 192; his policy tested, 192; *Endymion*, ib.; his last months—Indian and Irish speeches, 193; illness—consideration for others, and deathbed scene, 193, 194; summary of qualities and defects, 194; faults and virtues both those of intensity, 195; romance, 194; Lord Salisbury's and Lord Granville's public tributes to—the Queen's sorrow, 195, 196; his career best summarised by his farewell letter to constituents (1876) repeating the ideas and phrases of his early youth, 196.

Disraeli, Benjamin (father of Isaac Disraeli), 9.

Disraeli, Isaac (father of Lord Beaconsfield), 7 and n.<sup>1</sup>, 10, 11, 13, 14; quoted, 85.

Disraeli, Maria (*née* Basevi, wife of above), 7.

Disraeli, James, 10.

Disraeli, Mary Anne (Viscountess Beaconsfield), 31 n.<sup>1</sup>, 43; (1842) 63; (1867) 156; (1872) death, 160.

Disraeli, Naphtali alluded to, 10.

Disraeli, Ralph, 10.

Disraeli, Sarah, 9, 10, 46, 47; in *Endymion* ("Myra"), 192.

Donce, F. (antiquarian), 10.

D'Orsay, Count, 30, 39, 43.

Downman, H. (physician), 11.

Downman, J. (artist), 11.

Duncombe, 29 and n.<sup>1</sup>, 48.

Earle, Mr., 146.

Education, 49.

Eliot, 30.

Ellenborough, Lord, 119.

Ellis, Mr., 11 and n.<sup>2</sup>.

Ewald, Mr., 124.

Eyre, governor, 135.

- Falconieri, "Tita," 21.  
Foster, Mr., (1870) Education Act—Disraeli's attitude towards, 159.  
Fox, Charles, and "Emancipation," 99, 139.  
France (*and see* Louis Philippe and Napoleon III.), Disraeli's emphasis of England's *entente* with, (1859) 116, 118, 120; war with Austria, 125; dispatches as to, 126 n., 128; Commercial Treaties, 129; (1870) 159.  
Frere, Sir Bartle, 188, 189.  
  
Germany, (1864) 137; Bund dissolved, 147; (1870) Disraeli's view of, and attitude to, 159; (1876-77) "Berlin Memorandum," 172; mediation, 176; and Egypt, 179.  
Gibson, Milner, Mr., (1859) 127.  
Gladstone, Mr., on Peel and "party," 25 n.<sup>1</sup>; marriage, 48; on Cobden, (1839) 50; (1841-42) 99; and Peel, 56 and n.; (1842) 62; on "retaliation," 65; Maynooth, 70; on Disraeli's eloquence and Peel's behaviour, 78 n.<sup>1</sup>; praises Irish speech, 67; and Cobden, 87; "Peelites," *ib.*; on Colonies, 90; Disraeli's magnanimity to, 96; (1852) 99; Disraeli's Budgets, 102; (1853) Disraeli's invective, 105; (1855) 108; on Lord Derby's refusal, (1855) 109; finance, 110; (1855-56) 110; refuses to abet intrigues against Disraeli, 113; (1858-59) Disraeli tries to gain, 118; and savings banks franchise, 123 n., 143; Ionian Islands, 125; (1860) 125 n., 126; "Retrenchment Budgets" and "spirited foreign policy," 128; his "tack" of the Paper Duty Repeal, 129; complaints of Disraeli (1860-66) criticised, 129; proposed Charity Tax, 130; and America, 134; (1866) serves under Lord J. Russell, 142; his Reform Bill, 143; the effects of its failure, 143; contrasted with Disraeli, 145; on Russell and Palmerston, *ib.* n.<sup>2</sup>; and Disraeli's Reform Bill, 148-155; Irish Church Bill, 156, 157; (1869) Premier, 158; Irish Land Bill—his foreign policy, 158, 159; Disraeli defends him *v.* his own supporters, 159, 160; and dissolution, 158; blunders as to German War, 159; inconsistencies in tactics, 102, 129, 149; on Disraeli's wit, 163; Catholic University Bill—Ballot Act, 163; (1873) promises repeal of income-tax—resigns—Disraeli purposes that he should dissolve, 163; (1874) 158; Czar thanks, 166; dissolves, 163; resigns, 164; his hasty legislation, 167; (1875) 167;

- (1876) 171; Bulgarian "Atrocities" and Lowe's recantation, 171, 173; agitation prevented peace, 177; (1878) 178; Gladstone's compliment to Disraeli, referring to 1878, 183; insinuations by, 175; and Disraeli's Indian policy, 187, 188; his own policy, 188; "Peace at any price," 189; (1880) Burials Bill, 157; (1881) 190.
- Gore, C., 30.
- Goulburn, Mr., (1842) 62.
- Graham, Sir J., (1842) 62; and "Peel Letter," 63; (1846) on Peel's party defection, 80; and Cobden, 87; Disraeli's magnanimity towards, 96; (1852) 103; (1855) 109.
- Granville, Lord, (1859) 126; tribute to Disraeli, 195.
- Greece, 134, 175.
- Greenwood, Mr. F., 32, 146; (1875) 171.
- Greville quoted, 27-29.
- Grey, Lord, 23, 34<sup>n.</sup>.
- Grey, Colonel, 30.
- Grote, Mr. G., 48.
- Hamid, Abdul, 171, 172.
- Harley, 50, 67.
- Harrowby, Lord, 26.
- Hartington, Lord, on Disraeli, 19; (1859) 126.
- Heine, Heinrich, quoted, 5.
- Henley, Mr., 118; (1866) 125<sup>n.</sup>.
- Herbert, Sidney, 87, 127; death, 142.
- Hobhouse, Sir C., (1846), and Disraeli, 73.
- Hume (reformer), 29, 32; (1837) 48; (1850) 92, 101.
- "Independents," the, 28.
- India, Mutiny, and Disraeli on, 115; "India Bill," 119; (1876-78) 174; troops, 180; Disraeli's Indian policy, 184-188; last speech as to, 193.
- Inglis, Sir R., 71<sup>n.1</sup>.
- Ireland, (1832) 33; (1833) 35; (1835) 38; (1837) 47; (1838) 48; (1839-40) 50; (1842) 52; (1843-46) 67-71; "Maynooth," 70; (1845) famine and cotters, 73; Peel's coercion of, 82; Disraeli on coercion, 83<sup>n.</sup>; early Irish speeches, 68, 71; (1852) 102; "Irish Brigade," 103; (1866-67) twentieth Coercion Bill, 147; (1868) Church Bill, 156 *et seq.*; Fenianism, Romanism and Radicalism,

- 157; (1872) 161; (1879) Disraeli on, 191; his warnings as to, 191, 192; last speeches as to, 193.
- Israello, Bertucci, 9.
- Italy, (1853-54) 107; (1858-60) 115, 118, 120; Commercial Treaty, 129; Disraeli on Italian unity, 130; and France, 131; (1866-67) 147.
- Jamaica, (1839) 50.
- Jersey, Lady, in *Endymion* ("Zenobia"), 192.
- Jones, Dr., 12.
- Kenealy, Dr., Disraeli's generosity towards, 160.
- Khan, Yakub, 186.
- Kinglake quoted, 192.
- Laras, the, 8.
- Layards, the, 12.
- Lennoxes, the, (1846) 83.
- Lewis, Mrs. Wyndham, 31, 43, 46.  
"L. E. L.", 30.
- Lincoln, President, 135.
- Liverpool, Lord, and corn, 56.
- Locke-King, 92, 101.
- Lockhart, 15 and 16 n.<sup>1</sup>.
- Louis Philippe, King (1844), and Disraeli, 66; (1848) 89.
- Lowe, Mr., Lord Sherbrook, (1865) 135; (1876) 171; (1878) 178.
- Lowthers, the, (1846) 83.
- Lucian, 20.
- Luttrell, Mr., 30.
- Lyndhurst, Lord, 31; (1836-37) 37; (1842) 63.
- Lytton, Sir E. Bulwer, 31, 32; *New Monthly Magazine*, 43; (1859) 118.
- Lytton (second Lord), (1878) 185.
- Macaulay, Lord, praises Disraeli's Irish speech, 67; Budget, (1852) 102; quoted, 145.
- Magee, Bishop, 157 n.
- Malmesbury, Lord, (1859) 118, 119; the vexed question of his delayed dispatches, 126 n.
- Manchester School, 54, 55, 57, 58, 61, 65, 72, 74, 83; (1846) 86; (1860-67) Budgets, 128; (1872) almost exploded at Manchester, 161.

- Mann, Sir H., 9.  
 Manners, Lord John, 83; (1859) 118.  
 Marlborough, Duke of, 82.  
 Mathews, C., 30.  
 Melbourne, Lord, 30; (1834) 34; (1835) 40; (1840-41) 51,  
     55.  
 Menschikoff, Prince, (1853) 107.  
 Meredith, William, 11.  
 Metternich, Prince, 84; (1848) 89.  
 Midhat Pacha, "Young Turkey," 172, 175.  
 Moldavia, 107.  
 Molesworth, Mr., (1837) 48.  
 Monarchy, 101.  
 Montalemberts, the, 46.  
 Moore, T., 11, 30.  
 Morpeth, Lord, (1837) 48.  
 Murray, John, 11, 15, 16 and n.<sup>1</sup>.  
  
 Napier (editor), 16.  
 Napier, Admiral, 178.  
 Napoleon, 6.  
 Napoleon III., (1853-56) 107 *et seq.*, 116; and Italy, 131;  
     America and Mexico, 132; and European pacification,  
     137; Denmark, 138; (1870) 159; in *Endymion* ("Florentan"), 192.  
 Narvaez, 90.  
 Newcastle, Duke of, 130.  
 New Zealand, 91.  
 "Nonconformist conscience," 174.  
 Northbrook, Lord, 185, 187.  
 North, Lord, 139.  
 Norton, Mrs., 30 and n.<sup>1</sup>.  
  
 O'Connell, Daniel, 29, 32; (1835) 38, 39.  
 O'Connor, Feargus, 29 n.<sup>1</sup>; and Disraeli, 154.  
 Omar Pacha, 107.  
 Orsini, 116.  
  
 Pakington, Sir J., 118.  
 Palmerston, Lord, on Peel and Reform (*q.v.*), 28; (1835)  
     40, 41; (1837) 48; (1846) 63; (1846) 88; his tempera-  
     ment, *ib.*, 90; (1850) 91; (1850-51) breaks loose, 95;  
     (1852) Militia Bill and revenge, *ib.*; Disraeli's magna-

uimity to, 96, 101, 102; (1852-53) 104; (1855) "quits with Johnnie," 109; "Peelites" (*q.v.*), 109; first Administration, 111-116; (1856-58) "little difficulties," 114-116; (1859-60) intrigue against, 125 *n.*, 126; second Ministry, 126; adopts Derby's foreign policy, 127; his bustling interferences, 128; the double aspect of his Cabinet, *ib.*; and Gladstone, 129; and America, 132; (1864-65) and the Danish Question, 137-140; Poland, 137; death, 142; Eastern policy, 173; in *Endymion* ("Roehampton"), 192.

Peel, Sir Robert, 5, 25; and party, *ib.* and *n.*; uncreative, 26; Greville on, (1832-34) 27, 28, 30; (1834) 34, 35; Disraeli's hopes of, 36; "Tamworth Manifesto," 36; "Lichfield House Compact," 38, 39, 47; (1831-32) 99; (1839-40) 50; no-confidence motions, 50, 53; (1842) *ib.*; protests devotion to land, 52, 54, 55; and Gladstone, 56 and *n.*; and "physical equality," 58; (1842) Administration, 62, 63; Disraeli's "Letter" to, explained, 63-65; and Corn Laws and Tariff, 65 *et seq.*; (1843-44) "sole Minister," 71; his vacillations, 72 *et seq.*; (1845) his two sets of Cabinet Councils, 73; "Edinburgh Letter," not Ireland, decides him, 74; his speech for total repeal, 75, 76; Disraeli's philippics against, 76, 79; Disraeli's opinion of, Graham's (*q.v.*), and Peel's own, 80; parent of agitation, *ib.*; not "a Minister for stormy times," *ib.*; (1846) "Canning Episode," 81-83; coercion, 83; moral of overthrow, 84, 85; tribute to Cobden resented by party, 87; (1847) 87; (1850) compliments Disraeli, 94; his prophecy of Disraeli, 95; death, 94; on Colonies, 90; Disraeli on, 94 *n.*; and "Empire," 170.

Peel, General, 118, 151.

"Peelite," the, 80, 83 *n.<sup>1</sup>*; their temper, 87; Disraeli on, 88, 89, 102; (1853) 104; (1855) 109; (1859) 118, 119, 125.

Penns, the (friends of Isaac Disraeli), 10 *n.*

Persia, 115, 174, 185, 186.

Pitt, W., place as statesman, 2; and corn, 56; coercion, 83 *n.*

Plimsoll, Mr., 168.

Poland, Disraeli's sympathy with, 137, 138.

Potemkin, Prince, 106.

*Press*, The (1853-59, Disraeli's organ), quoted Chatham, 1, 2 *n.<sup>1</sup>*, 3, 72 *n.<sup>1</sup>*, 75 *n.<sup>2</sup>*, 93, 99, 100, 103, 104, 105, 121, 145.

- Prussia, 115, 137; (1866-67) 147.  
 Pye, 11.
- Raglan, Lord, 108.
- Reciprocity, 57, 80; (1879 and 1880) 190, 191.
- Reform Bill, (1832) 23; its circumstances and effects, 25-29; and Chartism, 59, 101.
- Reform Bill, (1867) 101, 121 *et seq.*; described and discerned, 148-155, 182.
- Reform Bill, (1884) 153.
- Reform Ministry, the, 26 *et seq.*, 34, 35, 49.
- Representative*, the two newspapers, 15 n.<sup>2</sup>, 16 n.<sup>1</sup>.
- Roberts, Lord, 185.
- Roebuck, Mr., 29; Crimean "Inquiry," 110.
- Rogers, S., 11.
- Rothschild, 171.
- Rousseau, 3, 6.
- Rowton, Lord, 193.
- Rumbold, Sir Horace, cited, 195.
- Russell, Lord J., 30; (1835-41) 40, 41, 114; (1837) 48; (1842-46) 55; (1845) "Edinburgh Letter," 74; unable to form Administration, 75; (1846) and coercion, league with Protectionists, 82; (1846-52) Premier, 86; state of parties, 86 *et seq.*, 88; "Durham Letter," 91; Disraeli on, (1853) 93; (1852) defeated, 95, 99; Reform, 101; recriminations, 103; (1852) 104; (1853) 106; (1854-55) 108, 109; (1855-56) 111; (1859) 119, 122, 127; (1866) first Administration, 142; and "Empire," 170.
- Russia, (1853-56) 106 *et seq.* [and see Berlin Congress and Treaty]; Disraeli's plan for settling Crimean War, 112; and Denmark, 138; (1871-72) 166; (1877) 172; Bulgarian Atrocities, 173-175, 177; (1877) quits Concert, 177; war, 178 *et seq.*; peace of Adrianople—"San Stefano," 178; results of, 179; negotiations for Congress, 179; Forward Party, 181; results to, of Berlin Treaty, 181-184; Afghanistan, 185-188; and Central Asia, *ib.*; attitude of Liberals to, 190; Disraeli conciliatory of, within just limits, 174, 176, 178, 185, 189; the Czar and, (1874) 166 *n.*
- St. Arnauld, Maréchal, 108
- Salisbury, Lord, on Disraeli, 7, 196; his imperialism, 170;

- (1859) 118; (1867) secedes, 151; Conference of Constantinople, 177.
- Schleswig-Holstein, 137, 147.
- Schouvaloff Memorandum, 182.
- Scott, Sir Walter, 11, 16 n.<sup>1</sup>.
- Sephardim, 8.
- Shaftesbury, Lord, 54; (1859) 119.
- Sheil, 47, 48.
- Shepstone, Sir Theophilus, alluded to, 189.
- Shere Ali, 185, 187.
- Sheridans, the, 30.
- Siddons, Mrs., 11.
- Somers, Lord, and "Empire," 170.
- Somerset, Granville, 28; (1842) 62.
- Somersets, the, (1846) 83.
- South Africa, scheme for federation of, 146, 189.
- Spinoza, 8.
- Spring-Rice, Mr., (1837) 48.
- Stanley, Lord (*see* Derby, Lord).
- Strangford, Lord, 62.
- Suez Canal shares, 169-171.
- Swain, Messrs., 14.
- Swift, Jonathan, 20, 34, 41 n., 106.
- Switzerland, 115, 131.
- Tait, Archbishop, 169.
- Transvaal, 188.
- Turkey [*and see* Berlin Congress and Treaty] (1853 *et seq.*), 106 *et seq.*; Disraeli's plan for settling Crimean War, 112; (1876) 171 *et seq.*; Bulgarian Atrocities, 173-175; (1877) remains obdurate, 177; war, 178 *et seq.*; "San Stefano," 179; effects of, 179; results to, of Berlin Treaty, 181-184.
- Utilitarians, 5, 29, 48, 101, 137.
- Victoria, Queen, 37, 40, 46; (1855) 109; (1876) "Empress," 170, 171; her decisive refutation of Lowe's East Retford assertions, 171; (1877) is Lord Beaconsfield's guest, 178; (1881) erects a memorial tablet to, 196.
- Villa Reals, the, 8.
- Villiers, Mr. C., (1837) 48.

- Vivian Grey*, circumstances and history of, 17-19; dedication, 17; George iv., *ib.*  
 Voltaire, 20.
- Wallachia, 107.  
 Walpole, Sir R., 42, 56.  
 Walpole, Spencer, Mr., 103; (1860) 125 n.  
 Warrender, 30.  
 Wellington, Duke of, 25, 27; (1828) 104; (1834) 34; and Palmerston, 41; (1845) and Peel, 73; (1846) 75; (1852) "Who, who?" 97.  
 William iv., 34, 46.  
 Williams, Mrs. Bridges, 194.  
 Wing, Mrs. (*née* Basevi), 7.  
 Wiseman, Cardinal, 91, 157.  
 Wolcot ("Peter Pindar"), 10 n.<sup>2</sup>.  
 Wood, Sir Charles, 88; (1852) 103 n.<sup>2</sup>.  
 Wyndham, Sir W., 33 and *n.*  
 "Young England," (1840) 49; (1840-45) 58-62; (1843) and Ireland (*q.v.*) 68; (1845) broken up, 71; its dreams come true in Disraeli's measures, 167; and influence on Lord Rowton, 193 *n.*  
 Zulu War, Disraeli's policy in, considered, 188, 189.

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